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RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE AND REASON AS THE SOURCES OF JONATHAN EDWARDS' DOCTRINE OF GOD

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THESIS

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PREFACE

I was first introduced to Jonathan Edwards during the Autumn Quarter of the year 1941-1942, in a course under President McGiffert. At that time I wrote a paper which is substantially the first chapter in this essay, and became interested in a further study of Edwards.

It has been my primary aim to understand Edwards, his background, his religious experience, and his method of theological argumentation. The value of this sort of study is primarily for the student who becomes better acquainted with the material. In my own case, I feel that the study has been valuable, and has been well worth the time involved.

I should like to record my gratitude to Dr. McGiffert for introducing me to Jonathan Edwards, and for loaning me his personal copy of the transcript of Edwards' Catalogue, and his copy of Dwight's Life of Edwards--both of which are in neither the Library of the University of California, nor the Holbrook Library of the Pacific School of Religion.

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CONTENTS

Preface		ii
Contents		iii
INTRODUCTION		1
CHAPTER I	JONATHAN EDWARDS' DOCTRINE OF GOD	3
i..	Man's Knowledge of God	8
ii.	The Nature of God--God as Being	12
iii.	God as Sovereign Lord--God as Will	23
iv.	Inherent Contradictions Involved	30
CHAPTER II	THE EXPERIENCED GOD	40
i.	Edwards' Religious Experience	40
ii.	Religious Experiences of Mrs. Edwards	48
iii.	Defense and Analysis of Experiential Religion	50
CHAPTER III	REASON AND EDWARDS' PHILOSOPHICAL APPROACH TO GOD	80
i.	The Use of Reason:	
	a. Freedom of the Will	80
	b. Original Sin	96
ii.	Reason and the Problem of Evil	100
CHAPTER IV	CONCLUSIONS	122
BIBLIOGRAPHY		136

CONTENTS

Preface ii
Contents iii

INTRODUCTION 1

CHAPTER I JONATHAN EDWARDS' DOCTRINE OF GOD 8
i. Man's Knowledge of God 8
ii. The Nature of God--God as Being 12
iii. God as Sovereign Lord--God as Will 25
iv. Important Doctrinal Implications Involved 30

CHAPTER II THE KINGDOM OF GOD 40
i. Edwards' Religious Experience 40
ii. Religious Experience of Mrs. Edwards 48
iii. Defense and Analysis of Experiential Religion 50

CHAPTER III REASON AND EDWARDS' PHILOSOPHICAL APPROACH TO GOD 80
i. The Use of Reason: 80
a. Freedom of the Will 86
b. Original Sin 100
ii. Reason and the Problem of Evil 122

CHAPTER IV CONCLUSIONS 132

BIBLIOGRAPHY 136

INTRODUCTION

The immediate object in the study of any man's thought is to come to terms with the man himself, to seek to understand him and his point of view. The articles or essays which come as a result of an intensive study of a man such as Edwards may not be central to the main purpose of the study. The object of this essay is to set forth Edwards' doctrine of God and to explore two sources which contributed to his "idea" of God.

It is my own conviction that there was a contradiction at the very heart of Edwards' system as it related to God, a contradiction which may be stated in the two phrases God as Will and God as Being. The phrase "sovereignty of God" has usually meant, in Christian theology, the final lordship of God; for Edwards, in his religious experiences and in his mature thought, sovereignty came to mean an engulfing control, in which God was ALL and man nothing. The contradiction was not actually met in Edwards' thought, but he does seem to have moved beyond the statement of God as Will, to the statement of God as Being. One of the original purposes of this study was to see how these two ideas could be held together; it must be stated in frankness that so far as I have been able to discover, these two different conceptions of God can not be conceived as belonging at the same time, to the God

whom we worship.

Chapter two is simply an attempt to report Edwards' religious experiences, those of his wife, and finally, his defense of the religion of the revivals. The underlying presupposition of the chapter is that this type of religious experience led directly to an idea of God as Being, in which the worshipper passively adored and fell prostrate before "that Great Being," The result of such worship was, in Edward's experience, Christian love.

In the third chapter attention is directed primarily, in the first section, to Edwards' polemical use of reason, rather than to the early philosophical deductions which are to be found in his "Notes." As an argumentative theologian he sought to defend his position more by defeating his opponents than by actually stating explicitly the philosophical basis for his idea of God. The second section of the chapter deals with the problem which ultimately tests all ideas of God--the problem of evil. There is a tendency in the late writings of Edwards to deny evil as an objective fact, and it was not too far a step from his position to that of Emerson's where evil was "passed through the fire of thought."

The conclusion draws the threads of the arguments together, to show that the experience of God Edwards knew so intimately from his own religious exercises, his observations of his wife and his parishoners, and his early philosophical deductions and his late theological tracts, all led him away from the idea of God as arbitrary sovereign will.

CHAPTER I

JONATHAN EDWARDS' DOCTRINE OF GOD

Jonathan Edwards dedicated his life to the service of God, yet one may read through his published works and find relatively few statements about God as He Himself is. Edwards' main treatises had to do with the delineation of true Christian religion, its apprehension and its practise. Everything that happened, everything that was, could be traced back to God as its ground and its cause. This was the fundamental presupposition upon which the life and the works of Edwards rested. It was the thing about which he was most certain.

Modern thought, and especially thought about God, has not been so certain that everything which happens can be traced to God's will. The main reason for this has been that we have introduced regulative ideas about God's nature and His will which seem to conflict with the very nature of our world. Whereas Edwards accepted the idea of God as The Absolute Being, modern theologians since Ritschl have a tendency to begin with the idea of God as Personal Love. The movement in philosophy in recent years has tended to check or to deny the idea of the Absolute which was so firmly entrenched in both theology and philosophy up to the nineteenth century. The works of Morgan, Alexander, Whitehead, not to mention William James, all point towards this same movement in philosophy.

Recently the position of the twentieth century philosophers has been pointed up and given a formal statement by Charles Hartshorne in his book Man's Vision of God. The point of the book is summed up in the preface thus:

> . . . . a magnificent intellectual content--far surpassing that of such systems as Thomism, Spinozism, German idealism, positivism (old or new)--is implicit in the religious faith most briefly expressed in the three words, God is love, which words I sincerely believe are contradicted as truly as they are embodied in the best known of the older theologies...[1]

Hartshorne sees the fundamental problem of our understanding of God's perfections to be "whether there is a defensible mean between the merely absolute and immutable deity of the classical theologians, and the merely imperfect and indefinitely unstable one of some recent thinkers."[2] His position is that there is such a "mean" and his book is an exposition of his solution. He points towards an "idea of a God not in every sense absolute and yet in the religious sense perfect."[3] In the constructive part of his book he suggests that it is the best procedure for a philosopher to begin with the "God of religion"[4] Whom he describes as

> the supremely loving friend, the perfectly righteous judge, and the primordial and everlasting ruler or supremely controlling power of the universe.[5]

There are, however, "non-religious tenets" which philosophers and theologians have utilized:

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[1]Charles Hartshorne, Man's Vision of God and the Logic of Theism (Chicago: Willett Clark & Company, 1941), p. ix.

[2]Ibid., p. xv.

[3]Ibid., p. xviii.

[4]Ibid., p. 86.

[5]Ibid., p. 94.

> God is non-temporal in the sense of having no past or future, since he knows all things in one eternal present; that God is purely active, in no respect or relation passive to anything; that he created the world "out of nothing," implying a beginning of creaturely existence in time; that he is "without body, parts, or passions," absolutely "simple," or unitary, a superintellectual being void of emotions, and also of will, if will involves internal distinctions between anticipatory and consummatory experiences, or if it involves the prior lack of any value which is subsequently to be realized.[1]

In criticizing this general tradition, he points out that the religious ideas can be derived "after a fashion" from the philosophical ideas,[2] but "it is quite impossible to deduce the non-religious tenets upon which the system is founded from the religious tenets which the system also accepts."[3]

It may not be amiss to suggest that the "God of religion" which Hartshorne accepts is really the Christian God rather than an "idea of God" arrived at by combining elements from the field of "comparative religions." But a more serious question comes to mind from the fact that in the religious experience of Christians, especially those within the tradition which is called "mysticism," there has been little if any awareness of the issue to which Hartshorne points. Approaching the problem from the side of logic rather than from the point of view of the mystic's "vision" or the piety of a man like Edwards, Hartshorne is able to defend what he chooses to call "second type theism," whose Object of de-

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[1] Ibid., p. 95.

[2] Ibid., p. 95.

[3] Ibid., p. 97.

votion is a Being "not in every sense absolute and yet in the religious sense perfect."

Now Jonathan Edwards, on the basis of his experience and his philosophy, came to the place where he felt it necessary to defend and to develop what Hartshorne terms "first-type theism," to apprehend God who is in every sense "absolute." Two centuries stand between us and Jonathan Edwards, and one development which has conditioned the thought of the last century has been the insight into the fact that man is a morally independent creature. Any system or part of a system which seems to deny the fact or possibility of moral growth in man has been subject to criticism from theologians and philosophers. John Oman's book Grace and Personality is still the best single exposition of the idea of God as seen in the light of man's freedom to become a morally free creature. But Edwards did not begin with this fundamental concept of man; he began with his religious experience, and his "doctrine" or his "idea" of God depended upon this fact. At this point Edwards broke with his contemporaries who were beginning to make the doctrine of man the starting point of their theology. A good deal of the controversy over the validity of the Revivals must be seen in this light. Edwards chose to understand man in terms of his religious experience which he interpreted as coming from God, rather than interpreting his experience in the light of an idea about man and human nature.

It is the central conviction of this chapter that there was a contradiction inherent in Edwards' thought about

God, a contradiction rising from the fact that there were two different "Gods" at the very heart of his system of God's sovereign control over the world and over men's actions: the God he worshiped and the God he conceived through his reason.

We shall make use of materials which come from several periods of his life. There are the famous "Notes on the Mind," and the "Notes on Natural Science" which date from his years at Yale when he met the exciting material in Locke's essays. We shall draw upon the Sermons which present us with Edwards the Preacher. We shall draw upon the famous books which came out of his experiences in the Revival of Religion in New England. We shall have recourse to his famous works which were written against Arminian Theology, in which we see Edwards working as a philosopher and a theologian. And we shall draw upon the two famous post-humous works which still make modern scholars wonder why they were not published within the author's lifetime.

Frederick Woodbridge, in a stimulating essay on the "Philosophy of Edwards" expressed the conviction that the early "native mysticism" of Edwards disrupted what would otherwise have been a great philosopher.[1] He went on to make a case out for the notion that Edwards' philosophy and his theology were in two separate and distinct categories of his thinking, that they never came together.[2] Dr. McGiffert sees in the common

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[1]Frederick Woodbridge, "Philosophy of Edwards", (Andover) Exercises Commemorating the Two-hundredth Anniversary of the Birth of Jonathan Edwards" (Andover: Andover Press, 1904), p. 71.

[2]Ibid., p. 58.

"absoluteness" of his idealistic philosophy and his Calvinist theology a meeting ground.[1]

i. MAN'S KNOWLEDGE OF GOD

Edwards, unlike John Calvin, thought that men could use their speculative reason to prove the existence of God. Calvin based his argument largely upon the first chapter in Romans; he began with the assumption that man has "an innate persuasion of the Divine existence"[2] which is indelibly imprinted upon man's very nature[3] and is impossible to eradicate. For Calvin, man as a rational creature simply perverted this innate knowledge, and assigned the events of life to chance rather than God's Providence. Real knowledge of God implies an active response, which he described as "faith united with a serious fear of God, comprehending a voluntary reverence and producing legitimate worship agreeable to the injunctions of the law."[4]

Samuel Clarke, in the Boyle Lectures in 1705, set out to demonstrate the Being and Attributes of God. His first proposition begins "it is absolutely and Undeniably certain, that Something has existed from all Eternity."[5] Edwards wrote in his "Notes on the Mind" that

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[1] Arthur Cushman McGiffert, Jr. Jonathan Edwards (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1932), p. 34.

[2] Institutes of the Christian Religion, I iii 3.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Ibid., I ii 2.

[5] Samuel Clarke, A Discourse Concerning the Being and Attributes of God. (8th ed.; London: James and John Knapton, 1732), p. 8.

> It seems strange sometimes to me, that there should be Being from all Eternity; and I am ready to say, What need was there that any thing should be? I should then ask myself, Whether it seems strange that there should be either Something, or Nothing? If so, it is not strange that there should BE; for that necessity of there being Something, or Nothing, implies it.[1]

This is not to suggest that Edwards was dependent upon Clarke's book or his method, but simply to suggest that Edwards as a college student was aware of the currents of thought of his time. His thought in his notes "On Being" again begins with the statement that Something must be, this Something must be "Necessary, Eternal, ... Infinite and Omnipresent." It cannot be solid, so "Space is this necessary, eternal, infinite and omnipresent being." He continues by saying that "I had as good speak plain: I have already said as much as, that Space is God."[2]

This same position is found in his work on the freedom of the will. This is intuitive knowledge, based upon having a "clear idea of general and universal Being." But the human mind is not of this sort, it lacks the strength to know by this direct manner that God exists. Therefore man is forced to proceed by argument. The only form of argument which is cogent is that which begins with the idea of Causation.[3] This rests upon the assumption that there is a "necessary

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[1]Sereno Edwards Dwight, The Life of President Edwards (New York: S. Converse, 1829), p. 668.

[2]Ibid., p. 706.

[3]cf. "Notes on Mind" #54, Ibid., p. 689.

connection of all events."[1] We may argue God's existence from our own existence. "We first ascend," says Edwards, "and prove a posteriori, or from effects, that there must be an eternal Cause; and then secondly, prove by argumentation, not intuition, that this Being must be necessarily existent; and then thirdly, from the proved necessity of his existence, we may descend, and prove many of his perfections a priori."[2]

Calvin made it clear in his general system that although there is a general revelation whereby God can be known, yet this was insufficient to create a strong piety, and it was necessary that there be a special revelation in the Bible,[3] which, thru the Agency of the Holy Spirit, gave an inward apprehension of the saving knowledge of God.[4] The Westminster Confession states "we acknowledge the inward illumination of the Spirit of God to be necessary for the saving understanding of such things as are revealed in the Word."[5] Edwards followed this position. In his prejected "Treatise on the Mind" he had determined to devote a section to the distinction between the "Sense of the Heart" and the "Philosophic distinction of the Understanding and the Will."[6] In his significant sermon on the "Reality of the Spiritual Light" he once more announced the difference between spiritual and common grace.

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[1] Jonathan Edwards, Freedom of the Will. Vol. II, Works of President Edwards (8th ed., New York: Leavitt & Allen, 1852), p. 169.

[2] Ibid., p. 27.

[3] Op. cit., I vi 1.

[4] Ibid., I vii 5.

[5] Chapter 1, section VI.

[6] Dwight, op. cit., p. 665.

It is important to note that Edwards was simply using the latest available "scientific" knowledge of his time in defense of the faith of his fathers. "Common grace differs from special," he said, "in that it influences only by assisting nature . . . . it only assists the faculties of the soul to do that more fully which they do by nature, as natural conscience or reason will, by mere nature, make a man sensible to guilt, and will accuse and condemn him when he has done amiss."[1] The technical discussion which backs this argument is to be found in the Treatise on Religious Affections where he attempted to show how God implants this new faculty of the soul. His explanation is that the new apprehension of spiritual values is more than a combination of "that kind of perceptions or sensations which the mind had before" . . . . ; it is, in short, "what some metaphysicians call a simple idea."[2] The distinction between "simple" and "complex" ideas is to be found in Locke, and is in all probability the source of Edwards' theory at this point.[3] A simple idea is one which the mind receives in a passive state, one which cannot be divided into other ideas. All thinking is the utilization of these simple ideas. Now the natural man is simply without the simple idea which will make it possible for him to comprehend the Divine Reality; this can come only thru the operation of the Holy Spirit.

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[1] Sermon "Reality of Spiritual Light" Vol. IV, pp. 439 f.

[2] Vol. III, p. 71.

[3] Clarence H. Faust and Thomas H. Johnson, Jonathan Edwards (New York: American Book Company, 1935), p. xxxiv f.

With this as a theoretical explanation of his system, he could well go on to say that special grace gives no "new doctrine," suggests "no new proposition to the mind, it teaches no new thing of God, or Christ, or another world, not taught in the Bible, but only gives a due apprehension of those things that are taught in the word of God."[1] The doctrines and ideas about the doctrines come from the Word, but "that due sense of the heart, wherein this light formally consists, is immediately by the Spirit of God."[2] So far as outward dogma is concerned, then, there is no difference between that held by Calvin, the Westminster Confession, and Jonathan Edwards. The dogma had significance for Edwards because it best stated an explanation of his own experiences.

ii. THE NATURE OF GOD--GOD AS BEING

Arthur Lovejoy, in his book The Great Chain of Being developes what seems to be the great inherent contradiction in all classical philosophy, and hence, in most Christian theology which has utilized this philosophy. He terms it the conflict between the "otherworldliness" and the "this-worldliness" emphasis; the emphasis upon God as an Impassible Being, Perfect in all perfections, and the emphasis upon God as a Being in some way directly responsible for, and directly related to, this world. This dual emphasis is to be found in

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[1] Sermon "Reality of Spiritual Light" Vol. IV, p. 441.

[2] Ibid., p. 444.

Edward's thought, as Lovejoy suggests in the following statement taken from the Dissertation Concerning the End for Which God Created the World:

> No notion of God's last end in creation of the world is agreeable to reason which would truly imply or infer any indigence, insufficiency and mutability in God; or any dependence of the Creator on the creature, for any part of his perfection or happiness. Because it is evident, by both Scripture and reason, that God is infinitely, eternally, unchangeably and independently glorious and perfect; that he stands in no need of, cannot be profited by, or receive anything from the creature, or be truly hurt, or be the subject of any suffering, or impair his glory and felicity from any other being.[1]

Lovejoy comments:

> This eternally serene and impassible Absolute is, manifestly somewhat difficult to recognize in the sadistic deity of the sermon on "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God"; but Edwards did not differ from most of the great theologians in having many Gods under one name.[2]

From the vantage point of the twentieth century we can point out that Edwards simply put together two traditions of thought which do not belong together; there is an unbridgable gap between the Impassible God who is eternally self-sufficient, a counterpart of the Aristotelian God of the Thomists, and the Deity who is jealous of His Glory, who is actively participating in the world of nature and in the historical events which concern man.

Edwards was not aware of this difficulty in the way

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[1] Volume II, p. 200.

[2] Arthur O. Lovejoy, The Great Chain of Being (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1938), p. 44.

we have stated it; but he was aware of the difficulty of talking with accuracy about the Divine Essence, as can be seen in the following:

> Language is indeed very deficient, in regard of terms, to express precise truth concerning our own minds, and their faculties and operations. . . . But language is much less adapted to express things in the mind of the incomprehensible Deity, precisely as they are. . . . We had need to be infinitely able metaphysicians, to conceive with clearness, according to strict, proper and perfect truth, concerning the nature of the Divine Essence, and the modes of the action and operation of the powers of the Divine Mind.[1]

But having said this, he proceeded in his dissertations and his meditations, to show (in effect) that he considered himself to be that perfect metaphysician. The language used in his later works, written while at Stockbridge, show his familarity with the scholastic idea of God as "pure act." One of the authors he was reading, Chevalier Ramsay, was using this kind of language. By the aid of his idealism Edwards was able, or thought he was able, to delve into the mysteries of the Divine Essence. In his observations on Election and Decrees he attempted to pry into the order of the Decrees (especially in number fifty-nine), but did so with little success. Because he conceived Being to be equated with Mind, he was able to suggest that everything is present in one instance in the Divine Mind--there is no past, present, or future for God.

For Edwards, there were two distinct kinds of perfec-

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[1] Freedom of the Will, Vol. II, p. 143.

tion in God's nature--the "moral" and the "natural." He described them as follows:

> [the] moral perfections of God. . . . the heart and the will of God are good, right, and infinitely becoming and lovely; such as his righteousness, truth, faithfulness, and goodness; or, in one word, his holiness. . . . God's natural attributes or perfections, [are] those attributes wherein, according to our way of conceiving of God, consists, not the holiness or moral goodness of God, but his greatness; such as his power, his knowledge, from everlasting to everlasting, his omnipresence, and his awful and terrible majesty.[1]

It is interesting to note that the qualifying phrase "according to our way of conceiving of God" stands in the middle of this discussion, and stands directly in line with the earlier Puritan thought about God. Perry Miller suggests that "the Puritan God is entirely incomprehensible to man."[2] Ultimately God was unknowable in the thought of Edwards, yet it was upon the generalizations derived from the "attributes" of God that the Revivals flourished, and it was upon the basis of these attributes that Edwards constructed his essay on the End in Creation.

The central position in this essay is that God possesses these attributes, i. e., "infinite power, wisdom, righteousness, goodness, etc." and at the same time He posseses the qualities of justice, goodness, and truth."[3] He knows that He

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[1] Religious Affections, Vol. III, p. 101.

[2] Perry Miller, The New England Mind in the Seventeenth Century (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1939), p. 10.

[3] Vol. II, p. 204.

has them, and that they are of worth in and of themselves. But, if these attributes are of value, they are even more valuable when exercised, or put into use. Hence it was for the purpose of further utilizing the potentialities of Divinity that the world was created. In his reasoning along this line, Edwards did not doubt but what the attributes he was basing his position on, really existed in the very nature of God.

Creation itself, in the essay under consideration, was not something which either could or could not have happened; God would have been less than perfect if He had not been led, by his own inner nature, to "diffuse his own fulness." The movement in thought, from the idea of a perfect Being, self-sufficient, self-moved, perfectly happy, to the idea of a perfect Being, whose very perfectability made it necessary that there be something more than He, is a movement in thought which occurred in Plato's mind, as it has in all the minds of those who have equated the religious idea of God (the creator) with the philosophical notion of pure Being.

The argument from perfection, or from the Absolute Being, leads to a kind of determinism, whether it be the Neo-Platonic "fecundity" as described by Lovejoy, or the determinism of Spinoza in his Ethics. The harmony and balance of perfect attributes which Edwards presupposed to be true statements about the nature of God, really denied the existence of a completely arbitrary and sovereign will. As a matter of fact, in his description of sovereignty in his essay on the

freedom of the Will, God's Will is but one of four elements in His Sovereignty: 1. Supreme, universal and infinite Power; 2. Supreme authority to do whatever He wills; 3. Supreme, underived and independent Will; and 4. Supreme, perfect, underived, self-sufficient and independent Wisdom.[1] Edwards suggests that the "glory and greatness of the Divine Sovereignty" is in the fact "that God's will is determined by his own infinite all-sufficient wisdom in every thing."[2] As Edwards developed the argument of moral necessity in the Divine Being, he came to the conclusion that everything is, everything exists just as it is, because this is the best and most wise arrangement possible.

The words Edwards uses, the metaphors, the vivid imagery, all lead to the suggestion that here we have pantheism--especially in the essay on the End in Creation. Professor Woodbridge says that when one reads this essay one wonders "if indeed these are the words of the greatest of American Theologians and not rather the words of some disciple of Plotinus or of a christian Spinoza. . . Mystic pantheism could not be more explicit."[3] Gilson, who maintains that both philosophy and theology have a proper sphere in the determination of religious truth, points out an error which he claims is to be

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[1] Freedom of the Will, Vol. II, p. 204.

[2] Ibid., pp. 144-145.

[3] Op. cit., pp. 60-61.

found in most of the orthodox theologians of the Church, and which would be just as true of Edwards as it is for some of the earlier doctors in the Church:

> When and where piety is permitted to inundate the philosophical field, the usual outcome is that, the better to extol the glory of God, pious-minded theologians proceed joyfully to annihilate God's own creation. God is great, and high, and almighty; what better proof could be given of these truths than that nature and men are essentially insignificant, low, and utterly powerless creatures? A very dangerous method indeed, for in the long run it is bound to hurt both philosophy and religion.[1]

Did Edwards, in his piety, joyfully annihilate God's creation? Or did he remain true to his theistic position and keep the two in balance? Was God equal to the world, limited by it? So far as Edwards himself was concerned, he kept God and the World apart in his formal thought. But both elements are there in this essay; Dr. McGiffert in his approach to the problem suggests that Edwards'

> . . . . mind passed back and forth with no apparent jolt or difficulty from a pantheistic to a personalistic interpretation of God. . . . . It seems not to have dawned on him that there is a contradiction in speaking of God as at the same time a person and an expansive substance.[2]

Edwards based his entire thought structure upon his idealistic philosophy, and thereby sought to avoid the difficulty we have been describing. In his note "On Being" he stated:

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[1] Henry Etienne Gilson, The Unity of Philosophical Experience (New York: Charles Scribners' Sons, 1937), p. 37 f.

[2] Op. cit., p. 181.

> . . . . those beings, which have knowledge and consciousness, are the only proper and real, and substantial beings; inasmuch as the being of other things is only by these. From hence, we may see the gross mistake of those, who think material things the most substantial beings, and spirits more like a show; whereas, spirits only are properly substance."[1]

Mind and substance were one and the same, and the attributes or properties which he called "God's fulness" implied all the perfections of God's moral and natural attributes.[2] Now Edwards thought that

> we may suppose, that a disposition in God, as an original property of his nature, to an emanation of his own infinite fulness, was what excited him to create the world; and so that the emanation itself was aimed at by him as a last end of the creation.[3]

In this essay Edwards did not attempt to describe the process of creation, nor did he explicitly attempt to state the relationship between God and the world. The problem was: what caused God to create it in the first place, what "excited" Him to cause it to be. Edwards found the answer to be in the very nature of the attributes which he assigned to God. In his metaphysics, Being, Space, God are the same; the world exists in the Divine Mind. But in his piety, the world exists, men exist, and God is.

The idea of pure "Being" in a state of inaction was an impossible idea for Edwards, just as it was for Ramsay whom

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[1] Dwight, op. cit., p. 706.

[2] End in Creation, Vol. II, p. 206.

[3] Ibid., p. 207.

he had been reading. Ramsay suggests, for example, that for "inactive powers" to be "dormant during a whole eternity in God are absolutely incompatible with the perfection of the divine nature, which must be infinitely, eternally, and essentially active."[1] Ramsay used this line of reasoning to prove the necessity of the Trinity as a rational idea; Edwards used the concept of energy to show that "the propensity [of God] . . . . to diffuse himself" is so much a part of God's nature that it is as "though he were not in his most complete and glorious state without it."[2] That which God diffuses in his divine energy is thought of in terms of "spiritual" excellence--divine knowledge, divine virtue and holiness, and divine happiness.

Edwards' entire thought-life was dominated by a theory of proportions which determined in part his thought about God, and therefore his conceptions of God's nature. One of the most striking, and original of his thoughts, is his approach to the idea of "love." We find traces of Edward's thought on this in his notes on "The Mind" as, for example, in the following: "There is an universal definition of Excellency: The Consent of Being to Being," or Being's consent to Entity.[3] "The highest Excellency. . . .must be the consent of Spirits one to

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[1]Quoted in Edwards A. Park's article "Remarks of Edwards on the Trinity" Bibliotheca Sacra, XXXVIII (1881), p. 181.

[2]End in Creation, Vol. II, p. 209.

[3]Dwight, op. cit., p. 696.

another. But the consent of Spirits consists half in their mutual love one to another. And the sweet harmony between the various parts of the Universe, in only an image of mutual love."[1] "There is no other way, that sensible things can consent one to another but by Equality, or by likeness, or by Proportion. Therefore, the lowest or most simple kind of beauty is equality or likeness; because by equality of likeness, one part consents with another part; but by Proportion one part may sweetly consent to ten thousand different parts."[2] With this proportion in mind, and with the definition of excellence as that of the "consent of Being to Being," it remains for love to be defined in terms of "to greater Spirits, more, and to less, less. . . . .It shows that it is not Being in general, but something else, that is loved, when love is not in proportion to the Extensiveness and Excellence of Being."[3] These early notes were later expanded in the essay on Creation and the essay on True Virtue. With this definition of love, God's love to (or for) Himself was excellency in itself--simply because of His Being; whereas the creature's love to himself (because of his meagerness of being) is something in itself of negligible value. Justice is also thought of in terms of proportion: "Justice is no otherwise excellent, than as it is the exercise, fruit, and manifestation of the mind's love or con-

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[1] Dwight, op. cit., p. 697.

[2] Ibid., p. 698.

[3] Ibid., p. 699.

sent to Being; nor Injustice deformed any otherwise, than as it is the highest degree of the contrary. Injustice is not to exert ourselves towards any Being as it deserves."[1]

Edwards generally refers to God as "He," but the frame of reference is always to an Impersonal Being. The impersonality of the whole system is seen in the fact that "light" is the most used word-picture to demonstrate the possibility of communication between God and man; the illustration of the rays of light from the sun to a jewel is chosen to show this relationship. The notion of the "personality of God" never occurred to Edwards, because the entire structure of attributes whereby men thought of God were by the very nature of the case, impersonal. The concept of love and of justice betray this same fundamental mind set; the fact that Edwards chose to demonstrate his theory of excellency by drawing diagrams in which relationships of inanimate objects are enjoyed for their aesthetic effect, shows once more that his frame of reference was impersonal.

It is a far distance from the metaphysical speculation of the Edwards of the notes on the Mind and the notes on the World, to the Edwards preaching the Enfield sermon. Here we learn of God's wrath--of the "mere arbitrary will, and uncovenanted, unobliged forbearance of an incensed God."[2] There are the "floods of God's vengeance," the "bow of God's wrath."

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[1] Dwight, op. cit., p. 700 f.

[2] "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God" Vol. IV, p. 317.

The picture presented in the following is far, far away from the study of the elder Edwards:

> That God will execute the fierceness of his anger, implies that he will inflict wrath without any pity; when God beholds the ineffable extremity of your case, and sees your torment so vastly disproportioned to your strength, and sees how your poor soul is crushed, and sinks down. . . . into an infinite gloom; he will have no compassion upon you, he will not forbear the executions of his wrath. . . .there shall be no moderation or mercy, nor will God then at all stay his rough wind.[1]

Altho this is no doubt an exercise of homiletical expression, there is no suggestion of an impassible deity here--but it is in line with his aesthetic description of love. It is another long step from the speculation of the student at Yale college asfound in the notes on the Mind, where Spirits are called "the communications of the Great Original Spirit; and doubtless, in metaphysical strictness and propriety, He is, as there is none else"[2] to the picture we have presented in the sermon "Justice of God in the Damnation of Sinners" where those selfsame spirits are portrayed burdened with sin, infinite sin against an Infinite Deity. Perhaps it is unfair to poise the metaphysical speculation against the homiletical expressions of Edwards' mind--but it does serve to confirm our suggestion that there is an unbridgable gap in his thought.

iii. GOD AS SOVEREIGN LORD--GOD AS WILL

God as Sovereign Lord over the world and over creatures

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[1] Ibid., p. 319.

[2] Dwight, op. cit., p. 700.

was one of the fundamental elements in Edwards' total system, and can best be understood from his preaching and from his correspondence. Sovereignty, in the sermons, implies unconditioned power and free action upon God's part. It means that "he is originally under no obligation to keep men from sinning."[1] It means that "He has a right to determine whether he will redeem any or no."[2] Edwards stated:

> It is meet that God should order all these things according to his own pleasure. By reason of his greatness and glory, by which he is infinitely above all, he is worthy to be sovereign, and that his pleasure should in all things take place; he is worthy that he should make himself his end, and that he should make nothing but his own wisdom his rule in pursuing that end, without asking leave or counsel of any, and without giving any account of any of his matters. . . .He is the Creator of all things; and all are absolutely and universally dependent on him; and therefore it is meet that he should act as the sovereign possessor of heaven and earth.[3]

The idea of God's justice as derived from this sermon seems worse than the lex talonis of old; it may be stated thus: "You have slighted and made light of God; and why then may not God justly slight you?"[4] "Seeing you thus disregard so great a God, is it a heinous thing for God to slight you, a little wretched, despicable creature; a worm, a mere nothing, and less than nothing; a vile insect, that has risen up in contempt against the Majesty of heaven and earth."[5] The whole sermon deals with God as Personal Will, not with God as ineffable Being.

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[1] "Justice of God in the Damnation of Sinners" Vol. IV, 230.

[2] Ibid., p. 231.

[3] Ibid., p. 232.

[4] Ibid., p. 236.

[5] Ibid., p. 237.

In the sermon "Punishment of the Wicked" we have another example of this stress on God's sovereign will--and it is just as fierce in its total effect as the former sermon. Edwards states (in his improvements) "Thou hast despised the mighty power of God; thou hast not been afraid of it. Now why is it not fit that God should show the greatness of his power in thy ruin?"[1] He asserts that the love of God which sinners despise and turn away from is equal in intensity--though in an entirely different way--to the punishment which they shall inherit. In his sermon on the "Eternity of Hell Torments" he answers the objection that this doctrine disproves the mercy and justice of God, using his well-known argument:

> Sin is heinous enough to deserve such a punishment, and such a punishment is no more than proportionable to the evil or demerit of sin. If the evil of sin be infinite, as the punishment is, then it is manifest that the punishment is no more than proportionable to the sin punished, and is no more than sin deserves. . . . .Sin being infinite evil deserves an infinite punishment, an infinite punishment is no more than it deserves; therefore such punishment is just.[2]

His answer to the problem of God's mercy is much the same:

> It is an unreasonable and unscriptural notion of the mercy of God, that he is merciful to such a sense that he cannot bear that penal justice should be executed. This is to conceive of the mercy of God as a passion to which his nature is so subject that God is liable to be moved, and affected, and overcome by seeing a creature in misery, so that he cannot bear to see justice executed; which is a most unworthy and absurd notion of the mercy of God, and would, if true

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[1]Vol. IV, p. 262.

[2]Ibid., p. 267.

argue great weakness....[1]

his argument rests upon two premises: Justice requires retribution, and Sin is infinite because perpetrated against an Infinite Being. It seems strange that Edwards did not see that this lurid picture of God being moved to wrath was just as damaging to his idea of God's impassability, and God's inability to suffer or be crossed, as was the idea of mercy which he rejected. And it is still more strange that he refused to apply to God the standards which he demanded of men in his ethical injunctions in the treatise on Religious Affections. There is this much in common in the two types of material--both point towards an objective, impersonal sense of harmonious relationships.

James Orr, in speaking at Andover on the Bicentenary of Edwards' birth, remarked in the course of his address that he supposed "there are few more terrible pages in literature than those of some of Jonathan Edwards' sermons on the punishment of the lost."[2] An example of what Orr probably had in mind is to be found in one of the doctrines set forth in a sermon: "When the saints in glory shall see the wrath of God executed on ungodly men, it will be no occasion of grief to

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[1] Ibid. See also the sermon "God naturally Men's Enemies." "That any body ever thought of, or devised any other way for God to show mercy, than to have mercy on whom he would have mercy, must arise from ignorance of their own hearts, whereby they were insensible what enemies they naturally are to God." Ibid., p. 62.

[2] James Orr, "The Influence of Edwards," Edwards' Bicentenary at Andover, p. 124.

them, but of rejoicing."[1] Thomas Johnson, in his classification of Edwards' sermons, suggests that it was the "doctrinal" sermons which Edwards preached outside his own pulpit which established his "reputation as a leading theologian."[2] The sermons which we have been examining came largely from the period of the height of the Great Awakening at Northampton, a period when Edwards consciously utilized all the means at his command to make religion the most significant part of his parishoners' lives. It is not saying too much when we assert that the doctrine of absolute Sovereignty in Edwards' thought was to emphasize the predestinarian doctrine which he accepted as a part of the Christian Religion.[3]

Another source of thought upon God's sovereign control over human destiny is his correspondence, both with members of his own family, and with his friends abroad. In the sermons and in the essays and treatises Edwards dealt largely with the affairs between God and men in a strictly religious frame of reference, and the thing of prime importance was the state of one's soul in relation to eternity. This point of view was brought out clearly in the Preface to the essay on the Revival of Religion in New England where the war between England and

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[1] "The End of the Wicked Contemplated" Vol. IV, p. 288.

[2] Op. cit., p.cxi.

[3] cf. "God's Sovereignty", IV, pp. 548-560. Allen says, "Divine Sovereignty. . . . the word as Edwards used it becomes synonymous with the tenet of an individual election to life, or reprobation to death. . . ." Alexander V. G. Allen, Jonathan Edwards (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1899), p. 59.

Spain was seen as less important than the war carried on in New England.[1] Edwards felt keenly that "God has wrought great things in New England" and that this was but a prelude to "something vastly greater, more pure, and more extensive."[2]

Writing on Jan. 21, 1747 to his correspondent Mr. M'Culloch he continued his exploration of Scriptural prophecies and interpretation of historical events in terms of them. He mentioned specifically the suppression of a rebellion in Scotland, and "in America, in our preservation from the great French Armada, from Brest, and their utter disappointment and confusion, by the immediate and wonderful Hand of Heaven against them, without any interposition of any arm of flesh."[3] In previous correspondence he had offered a suggestion for the interpretation of the "pouring out of the sixth vial on the river Euphrates, and the approach of the happy day of the Church's prosperity and glory" and saw in the defeat of the French armada, and the falling off of the French East India Trade "By the dreadful hand of heaven"[4] a confirmation of that interpretation; moreover, after briefly surveying the special preservation of the New England colonies he felt that "it gives me great hope that God's appointed time is approaching for the triumphs and displays of his infinite, sovereign grace."[5]

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[1] Volume III, p. 275.

[2] Letter to Mr. M'Culloch, May 12, 1743. Dwight, op. cit., pp. 196-198. Cf. also Dwight, p. 213.

[3] Ibid., p. 230.

[4] Ibid., p. 231.

[5] Ibid., p. 232.

Again, later in 1747, Edwards wrote M'Culloch that the deliverance of America from the French and the Indians was "very wonderful and affecting; our enemies own that the Heavens are on our side, and fight for us."[1]

One is almost tempted to say that there are apparently two Edwards thinking and writing in the decade of 1747 to 1757; one is the religious organizer, who, from his understanding of Scriptural prophecy and his interpretation of current events, felt that God was about to inagurate a new and bright day for His Church. The other Edwards we picture for ourselves is the lonely scholar, interrupting his meditation to teach Indian boys their catechisms, or in settling the problems inherent in a missionary outpost where there were opportunities of exploiting the Indians. The scholar searches for reasons, for arguments, for clues to further validate his convictions, particularly those which have to deal with the problems of predestination and election. In his meditations reflected in "Decrees and Elections,[2] and in Efficacious Grace[3] we see Edwards speculating upon the Divine Attributes in such a way as to make secure the doctrines of election and damnation.

When his thought finally appeared in print in the essay Freedom of the Will (1754), he had decided to base his argument upon the attribute of Divine foreknowledge. By an exposition of Biblical texts he proved to his own satisfaction

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[1] Dwight, op. cit., pp. 243-244.

[2] Vol. II, pp. 513-546. [3] Ibid., pp. 547-600.

that God had foreknowledge of historical events, long before they happened. Next he set forth a rational basis for seeing the necessity of this attribute. Without foreknowledge God

> . . . . must be a Being, who, instead of being absolutely immutable, must necessarily be the subject of infinitely the most numerous acts of repentance, and changes of intention, of any being whatsoever. . . .In such a situation, he must have little else to do, but to mend broken links, as well as he can. . . .The Supreme Lord of all things must have need be under great and miserable disadvantages, in governing the world which he has made, and has the care of, through his being utterly unable to find out things of chief importance which, hereafter, shall befall his system.[1]

The presupposition upon which this argument rests is, of course, that God actually does govern: "The God that is the Creator of the world, is doubtless also the Governor of it; for he is able to govern it. He that had power to give being to the world, and set all the parts of it in order, has doubtless power to dispose of the world that he has made; to continue the order he has constituted, or to alter it."[2] Granting that God has foreknowledge, "certain and infallible," of man's volitions, it follows that "it is impossible but the event should come to pass."[3]

iv. INHERENT CONTRADICTIONS INVOLVED

These later speculations differ from the idea of sovereignty we find in the sermons, for once again Edwards is

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[1] Freedom of the Will, Vol. II, p. 71.

[2] Concerning God's Moral Government, Vol. I, p. 565.

[3] Freedom of the Will, Vol. II, p. 74.

arguing from a perfect, impassible Being, with foreknowledge, a supreme happiness, and all the other perfections which he liked to append to God. Where Calvin had been content to say that God had a reason, beyond anything the human mind could see while men were limited to temporal existence, Edwards attempted to understand the method whereby the divine decrees and elections were made. And in his speculations, he went from an idea of Sovereign Will, to the idea of a Necessary Will, a Will limited by a conception of harmony. "God decrees," he said, "all things harmoniously, and in excellent order, one thing harmonizes with another, and there is such a relation between all the decrees, as makes the most excellent order."[1] Everything, from God's point of view, happens in an eternal "now."

> Decrees of our everlasting state were not before our prayers and strivings, for these are as much present with God from all eternity, as they are the moment they are present with us. They are present as part of his decrees, or rather, as the same; and they did as really exist in eternity, with respect to God, as they exist in time, and as much at one time as another.[2]

In the "universality of things" there is harmony, and a final end, which men do not fully understand, but which exists.[3] But seen from the point of view of man, and man's observation of the world, there is an observable teleological purpose

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[1] Decrees and Elections, no. 4, Vol. II, p. 514.

[2] Ibid., no. 7, p. 515.

[3] Ibid., no. 9, p. 516.

being worked out in the world. One of the clearest statements of this is to be found in Edwards' thought concerning God's moral government of the world. Commenting upon a passage in Ecclesiastes, where the world is pictured in "continual labor," he states "there is some great event and issue of things that this labor is for; some grand period aimed at." He asks, "Does God make the world restless, to move and revolve in all its parts, to make no progress? To labor with motions so mighty and vast, only to come to the same place again? To be just where it was before?" and answers by saying that "Doubtless some end is nearer approached to by these revolutions. ."[1]

When Edwards began his thought from observations of the world, of human existence, he saw God's purpose being worked out. When he retired to the study, and attempted to comprehend the totality of existence, he designed a universal system in which everything had a place, a fixed place of being, which was significant only in so far as it fitted in with the total scheme of things. In his speculations he arrived at a system of Necessity in which the "arbitrariness" of which he speaks in his sermons, completely disappears. The arbitrariness comes because man can see it only from man's perspective; but Edwards proposed to understand it from God's point of view.

Edwards had a doctrine of human depravity which demanded the idea of restraining grace in order to make plausible the amount of human well-being which he saw about him. The

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[1]Concerning God's Moral Government, Vol. I, p. 573.

work of restraining grace is generally treated under the term "providence" in the sermons. A good example of his thought at this point is to be found in the sermon "Men Naturally God's Enemies" where, after "proving" his doctrine, he went on to show how much we are "indebted to God for his restraining grace."[1] God holds "the reins upon the corruptions of a wicked world" and sets the limits upon men's wickedness; this is a "more glorious work than his ruling the raging of the sea, and setting bounds to its proud waves, and saying hither-to shall thou come and no further."[2] Men are restrained by the "word and ordinances," by "the light of nature," (men's consciences) by the "more general providence, or his providence in ordering the state of mankind"[3] (man's probation here in this life, as a testing for eternal life; man's general fear of doing that which will be disgraceful or unbecoming in the sight of his fellow-men, human laws, and finally, the Church).

In the concluding page to Freedom of the Will Edwards summarized his mature solution to the problem of God's control over the world and man:

> As it has been demonstrated, that the futurity of all future events is established by previous necessity, either natural or moral; so it is manifest that the Sovereign Creator and Disposer of the world has ordered this necessity, by ordering his own conduct, either in designedly acting or forbearing to act. For, as the being of the world is from God, so the circumstances in which it had its being at first, both negative and positive, must be ordered by him, in one of

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[1]Vol. IV, p. 53.

[2]Ibid., p. 54.

[3]Ibid., pp. 54-55.

> these ways; and all the necessary consequences of these circumstances must be ordered by him. And God's active and positive interpositions, after the world was created, and the consequence of these interpositions; also every instance of his forbearing to interpose, and the sure consequence of this forbearance, must all be determined according to his pleasure.[1]

This "pleasure" itself was limited by the principle of harmony which was a vital part of Edwards' total system. Altho Edwards does not specifically treat the problem of Providence in the way that Calvin did, the total emphasis is much the same. Both men saw this life as it appeared under the pure light of eternity. Edwards was vitally interested in the revival movement, and therefore providence, as we have seen, was always seen in the light of God's Spirit working in this particular sphere. Calvin, on the other hand, was concerned in making Geneva a fit place in which men could worship God as He required. Providence in its relationship to political events has a larger place in Calvin's works than it has in Edwards', primarily because the historical situation in Geneve in the middle of the sixteenth century was vastly different from that of New England in the middle of the eighteenth. Both men were agreed that "the world is not our abiding place," that "our state in the future world. . . . is of so much greater importance than our state here, that all our concerns in this world should be wholly subordinated to it."[2]

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[1]Volume II, p. 177.

[2]Sermon, "The Christian Pilgrim" printed in part in Faust and Johnson's Jonathan Edwards, pp. 130,131.

A theological system which stresses the transcendence and otherness of God as the Edwardean system did, must of necessity posit some method whereby God communicates with man. In Edwards' system, man knows the Father indirectly, thru the operation of the Spirit in, or through, the heart. In the youthful sermon "God Glorified in Men's Dependence" we see the importance placed upon the work of the Holy Spirit. The saints have a kind of "spiritual excellency" through a "kind of participation of God," they are "made partakers of the divine nature, or moral image of God. . . .The saint hath spiritual joy and pleasure by a kind of effusion of God on the Soul. In these things the redeemed have communion with God; that is, they partake with him and of him."[1] The Holy Spirit becomes an "inhabitant. . . .a vital principle in the soul; he, acting in, upon, and with the soul, becomes a fountain of true holiness and joy, as a spring is of water, by the exertion and diffusion of itself."[2]

Edwards felt that "it is within the reach of naked reason to perceive certainly that there are thus, distinct, in God, each of which is the same, three that must be distinct, and that there are not, nor can be any more, distinct, Really and truly distinct, but three, either distinct persons, or properties."[3] He arrived at this position through his philo-

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[1]Vol. IV, p. 174. [2]Ibid., p. 175.

[3]Edwards' Bicentenary at Andover, "Miscellanies" found in Appendix I, p. 9.

sophical idealism, positing God as "infinitely happy from all eternity"[1] enjoying Himself, and thereby reflecting upon Himself. The Son is thus the perfect Idea God has of Himself, and the Holy Spirit "is the Act of God, between the Father and the Son infinitely loving and delighting in each other."[2] This same trend of thought is again to be found in the Treatise on Grace, which remained unpublished for a century. Here again we find that

> . . . .the Holy Spirit does in some ineffable and inconceivable manner proceed, and is breathed forth both from the Father and the Son, by the Divine Essence being wholly poured and flowing out in that infinitely intense, holy, and pure love and delight that continually and unchangeably breathes forth from the Father and the Son, primarily towards each other, and secondarily towards the creature, and so flowing forth in a different subsistence or person in a manner to us utterly inexplicable and inconceivable, and that this is that person that is poured forth into the hearts of angels and saints.[3]

Grace therefore is "no other than that very love of God--that is, God, in one of the Persons of the Trinity, uniting Himself to the soul of the creature, as a vital principle."[4] Since the very nature of God is Love, the Saints "are not only partakers of a nature that may, in some sense, be called Divine, ...but the very Deity does in some sense dwell in them."[5] Yet there is no "habit" of grace; "all succeeding acts of grace must be as immediately, and to all intents and purposes, as

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[1] Ibid. [2] Ibid., p. 13.

[3] Quoted in Parks, op. cit., p. 163.

[4] Ibid., p. 173. [5] Ibid., p. 174.

much from the immediate acting of the Spirit of God on the soul, as the first."[1]

Dr. Park, after his study of this unpublished treatise on Grace, and the published works of Edwards, came to the conclusion that in the first and the last published works, "holiness or love to God is. . . .represented as depending on communion with God, as caused by the influence of God, not as being itself the Divine Spirit."[2] It seems to me that the language in the first sermons, especially the one on "Divine Light," and the language in Religious Affections, as well as the late unpublished works, is not subject to the close distinctions Dr. Park makes; Edwards, in his own experiences was constantly aware of the vast gulf between man and God--but he also experienced this divine and holy love as a living principle (or at least, an acting principle). Just how the Holy Spirit could "dwell" in man's soul, and therefore act constantly but not habitually, Edwards does not make clear.

Actually, it seems as though the element of Sovereignty and Lordship was utterly denied in this kind of thinking. His analysis of the Trinity, and particularly the Third Person of the Trinity as Love, is much more congenial to his early religious experience, and his early metaphysics, than it is to his strictly "revivalistic" sermons. It is almost impossible to

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[1] Ibid., p. 176.

[2] Second article on "Remarks of Edwards on the Trinity" Bibliotheca Sacra, Vol. XXXVIII (1881), p. 350.

hold the idea of the "angry" God and the God of pure Love together. One would like to suppose that there was an interlude in Edwards' thought, which broke up the essential unity and harmony of the young preacher in New York and the elder philosopher at Stockbridge, yet this is not the case.

The completely mysterious deity, understood from the human side by the use of the notion of Attributes, was, for Edwards, the same Reality he experienced in prayer and in contemplation. The God who ordered the affairs of the French and British armies and navies, was the same Deity who became an operating principle in the hearts of the saints. The God whose justice was offended by human sin, who was under no necessity to save or elect any of His creatures, was the same God who was infinitely happy and blessed. The God, so great, so powerful, and good, whose very nature it was to be expansive, was at the same time the Deity who did communicate with men, and gave them His Written Word. Christ the Mediator of his theology was Christ the example of his piety. Does this all mean that there were contradictions at the heart of his "system"?

The answer must be, I think, that if one seeks to understand Edwards as a system builder, he can find nothing but contradictions. But if one seeks to understand him as a man of piety and at the same time a man of learning and speculation, who felt the necessity of understanding the bases of his piety, then Edwards is not so much a man of contradictions as he is a man who utilizes all avenues of intellectual activity in order to explain to himself that which he had known in his own

life, and seen in the life of his wife and his parishoners. There is an underlying unity in the works of Edwards, but it does not come from any one aspect of his thought; it comes, rather, from the fact that for him God was the most important Fact in his life, Who demanded his mind, heart, and strength. He could conceive of God as Divine Mind, as Divine Being, and as Divine Lord. As he thought of God under these three terms, he assigned to God the analogous properties which the human mind conceives of when it deals with mind, being, and Lord (the last mentioned being used in the political sense). In all these areas, Edwards dwelt in the eighteenth century, and accepted the fundamental premises of his time.

CHAPTER II

THE EXPERIENCED GOD

i. EDWARDS' RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE

Joseph Haroutunian, one of the modern writers who has spent hours with Jonathan Edwards' writings, comes to the conclusion that

> although he was a supremely clear thinker, his chief contributions to Christian literature must remain his investigations into the essentials of genuine piety.[1]

The interest Edwards had in the condition of religion in colonial New England was a part of his inheritance from his father; his first letter begins "through the wonderful goodness and mercy of God, there has been in this place a very remarkable outpouring of the Spirit of God"--this written by Edwards when he was twelve and a half years old.[2]

Oliver Wendell Holmes, writing in 1880, observed that Edwards'

> . . . .ancestors had fed on sermons so long that he must have been born with scriptural texts lying latent in his embyronic thinking-marrow.[3]

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[1] "Jonathan Edwards: A Study in Godliness," Journal of Religion, XI (1931), p. 405.

[2] Dwight, op. cit., p. 21.

[3] "Jonathan Edwards," International Review, IX, p. 5.

Altho there is the element of too clever writing in this remark, it does justice to the fact that Edwards was greatly indebted to his religious environment. Reared on the Shorter Catechism designed by the Westminster Divines, the first question was indellibly imprinted upon his character--"Man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him forever," and his life was spent in fulfilling this function. His first deep religious exercises occurred while he was at home, during a "remarkable awakening" in his father's congregation.[1] As a result of this experience, there followed a time when he was "abundant in religious duties"--to the extent that he set aside five times a day for special prayer, held religious conversations with other boys, and, as he put it from the point of view of middle-age reflection, it was his delight "to abound in religious duties." In the course of time these early pleasures in the things of religion decreased, and he "returned like a dog to his vomit, and went on in the ways of sin."

His second deep exercise came during his years at Yale, when during a siege of pleurisy, it seemed to him that God "shook [me] over the pit of hell."[2] But again he found it difficult to attend to his "religious duties," and it was during this period that his "Resolutions" with their severe promises to God came to play a part in his struggle with his estrangement from God. He felt these duties were without "that kind of affection and delight which I had formerly experienced"

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[1]Dwight, op. cit., p. 59. [2]Ibid., p. 59.

and the method persued was more one of "inward struggles, and conflicts, and self-reflections." Writing from the vantage point of maturity, he admitted that altho he had made seeking salvation his "main business," yet he questioned the saving efficacy of his efforts.

His questioning is pointed up by an entry into his Diary, dated December 18, 1722:

> The reason why I. . . .question my interest in God's love and favour, is.--1. Because I cannot speak so fully to my experience of that preparatory work, of which divines speak;--2. I do not remember that I experienced regeneration, exactly in those steps, in which divines say it is generally wrought:--3. I do not feel the christian graces sensibly enough, particularly faith. I fear they are only such hypocritical outside affections, which wicked men may feel, as well as others. They do not seem to be sufficiently inward, full, sincere, entire, and hearty. They do not seem so substantial, and so wrought into my very nature, as I could wish. . . .[1]

Dr. McGiffert has noticed an indication of a "deep-seated craving for social reinforcement" in Edwards' decision to enter the ministry;[2] the dependence upon the dogmas of the Divines is but one more piece of evidence to show his adherence to orthodox and firm ways of thinking and acting. His "sense of Divine things" began, he says, about a year and a half before he went to New York, almost a full year before the entries begin to appear in the Diary. Our information about these early experiences is to be found only in the account written some twenty years after the event, but even at such a distance one

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[1] Ibid., p. 76.

[2] Op. cit., p. 25.

feels the moving power, and the rapture which must have been so strong in his experience.

He tells us that his mind had been "full of objections" against the doctrine of God's sovereignty from his early childhood, especially as it related to "choosing whom he would to eternal life, and rejecting whom he pleased; leaving them eternally to perish, and be everlastingly tormented in hell. It used to appear like a horrible doctrine to me."[1] But gradually the doctrine lost its horribleness; at first he was intellectually convinced of its reasonableness and justice--and from that time on he felt he had "scarce ever have found so much as the rising of an objection against it, in the most absolute sense, in God shewing mercy to whom he will shew mercy, and hardening whom he will. God's absolute sovereignty, and justice with respect to salvation and damnation, is what my mind seem to rest assured of, as much as of any thing that I see with my eyes."[2] But this intellectual apprehension was not enough, as he made so clear in Religious Affections.

The second apprehension he called a "delightful conviction," one which appeared "exceedingly pleasant, bright and sweet." The first time he felt this came after reading I Timothy i:17: Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen. He says

As I read the words, there came into my soul, and was

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[1] Dwight, op. cit., p. 60. [2] Ibid.

> as it were diffused through it, a sense of the glory of the Divine Being; a new sense, quite different from anything I ever experienced before. Never any words of Scripture seemed to me as these words did. I thought with myself, how excellent a Being that was, and how happy I should be, if I might enjoy that God, and be rapt up to him in heaven, and be as it were swallowed up in him for ever! I kept saying and as it were singing, over these words of scripture to myself; and went to pray to God that I might enjoy him, and prayed in a manner quite different from what I used to do; with a new sort of affection. But it never came into my thought, that there was anything spiritual or of a saving nature in this.[1]

Well could he wonder at the nature of these experiences! One does not ordinarily think of a stern Calvinist of any period, longing to be swallowed up in the very Being of God. The very description of his feelings while reading the book of Canticles again underlines the the fact that in these early experiences there was something altogether different from the sternness and the sterility of dogmas and doctrines:

> The whole book of Canticles used to be pleasant to me, and I used to be much in reading it, about that time; and found from time to time, an inward sweetness, that would carry me away, in my contemplations. This I know not how to express otherwise, than by a calm, sweet abstraction of soul from all the concerns of the world; and sometimes a kind of vision, or fixed ideas and imaginations, of being alone in the mountains, or some solitary wilderness, far from all mankind, sweetly conversing with Christ, and wrapt and swallowed up in God. The sense I had of divine things, would often of a sudden kindle up, as it were, a sweet burning in my heart; an ardour of soul, that I know not how to express.[2]

His very attitude towards nature was changed by this "sense of divine things," and "the appearance of every thing was altered; there seemed to be. . . .a calm, sweet, cast, or

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[1] Ibid.

[2] Ibid., p. 61.

appearance of divine glory, in almost everything." He went to the woods and the fields, spent hours looking at the moon at night and the clouds in the day time. His childhood fright of thunder and lightning was suddenly reversed, to the extent that "scarce any thing, among all the works of nature, was so sweet to me as thunder and lightning."[1] One can almost see his long, oval, delicate face, eyes afire with the majesty of a thunder shower before him, singing or chanting his meditations to the Great Being he saw behind the appearance of the storm. It was out of a lifetime of this sort of experience that he could generalize, and contrast his early religious activities:

> The delights which I now felt in the things of religion were of an exceedingly different kind from those beforehand mentioned, that I had when a boy; and what then I had no notion of, than one born blind has of pleasant and beautiful colors. They were of a more inward, pure, soul animating and refreshing nature. Those former delights never reached the heart; and did not arise from any sight of the divine excellency of the things of God; or any taste of the soul-satisfying and life-giving good there is in them.[2]

Probably Edwards did not realize just the full import of his short ministry in New York (August, 1722 to May, 1723); certainly it was one of the high times of his life, a time when he devoted himself to the fulness of the Christian life. "I felt," wrote Edwards, "a burning desire to be, in every thing, a complete christian; and, conformed to the blessed image of Christ; and that I might live, in all things, accord-

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[1] Ibid., p. 62. [2] Ibid.

ing to the pure, sweet and blessed rules of the gospel. I had an eager thirsting after progress in these things; which put me upon pursuing and pressing after them."[1] During his meditations he felt burdened with the problem of expressing his feelings and consequently spent a good deal of time meditating on the excellencies of heaven, and "living there in perfect holiness, humility and love; and it used at that time to appear a great part of the happiness of heaven, that there the saints could express their love to Christ."[2]

Edwards longed for holiness with a passionate eagerness. At the time, he felt holiness to be of

> a sweet, pleasant, charming, serene, calm nature; which brought an inexpressible purity, brightness, peacefulness and ravishment of the soul. . . .it made the soul like a field or garden of God, with all manner of pleasant flowers; enjoying a sweet calm, and the gently vivifying beams of the sun. The soul of the true Christian. . . .appeared like such a little white flower as we see in the spring of the year; low and humble on the ground, opening its bosom, to receive the pleasant beams of the sun's glory; rejoicing, as it were, in a calm rapture; diffusing around a sweet fragrancy; standing peacefully and lovingly, in the midst of other flowers round about; all in like manner opening their bosoms, to drink in the light of the sun. . . .My heart panted after this---to lie low before God, as in the dust; that I might be nothing and that God might be ALL, that I might become as a little child.[3]

This is the picture of the contemplative mystic, the man who leaves the woes and trials of the world in order to enjoy the pure serenity of heaven; and Edwards was not completely free

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[1]Dwight, op. cit., p. 64. [2]Ibid. p. 65.

[3]Ibid.

of this. He relates how, after leaving his newly found friends in New York, and returning to Windsor, he felt his heart "ready to sink." But his mind and spirit was reassured when he contemplated the "heavenly state. . . .where reigns heavenly, calm, and delightful love, without alloy. . . .where there is the enjoyment or persons loved, without ever parting."[1]

The figures he used to describe his longing to be with Christ, to be "emptied and annihilated, to lie in the dust, and to be full of Christ alone; to love him with a holy and pure love; to trust in him; to live upon him; to serve and follow him; and to be perfectly sanctified and made pure, with a divine and heavenly purity"[2] show a single-mindedness which made it possible for him to avoid some of the more vexacious and tedious problems of humdrum living. However low and mean he may have felt during his visions, he tried to make out an even blacker case for himself in his reflections:

> my wickedness, as I am in myself, has long appeared to me perfectly ineffable, and swallowing up all though and imagination; like an infinite deluge, or mountains over my head. I know not how to express better what my sins appear to me to be, than by heaping infinite upon infinite, and multiplying infinite by infinite. . . .When I look into my heart and take a view of my wickedness, it looks like an abyss infinitely deeper than hell. And it appears to me, that were it not for free grace, exalted and raised up to the infinite height of all the fulness and glory of the great Jehovah, and the arm of his power and grace stretched forth in all the majesty of his power, and in all the glory of his sovereignty, I should appear sunk down in my sins below hell itself; far beyond the sight of every thing, but the eye of sovereign grace, that can pierce even

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[1] Ibid., p. 67. [2] Ibid., p. 133.

> down to such a depth. And yet it seems to me, that my conviction of sin is exceeding small, and faint; it is enough to amaze me, that I have no more sense of my sin.[1]

ii. RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCES OF MRS. EDWARDS

Another source of the pietistic stream which finally made itself felt in the greatest works Edwards wrote, was the religious experiences of his wife, of whom he wrote in 1723:

> They say there is a young lady in _____ who is beloved of that Great Being, who made and rules the world, and that there are certain seasons in which this Great Being, in some way or other invisible, comes to her and fills her mind with exceeding sweet delight, and that she hardly cares for anything, except to meditate on him--that she expects after a while to be received up where he is, to be raised up out of the world and caught up into heaven; being assured that he loves her too well to let her remain at a distance from him always.[2]

One of the most interesting passages in Dwight's Life of President Edwards has to do with a statement prepared by Mrs. Edwards in 1742, describing her own experiences. They vary. At times she had a feeling that the "peace and happiness" which she felt, was "altogether inexpressible. It seemed to be that which came from heaven; to be eternal and unchangeable. I seemed to be lifted above earth and hell, out of the reach of every thing here below, so that I could look on all the rage and enmity of men or devils, with a kind of holy indifference, and an undisturbed tranquility. At the same time I felt a compassion and love for all mankind, and a deep abase-

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[1] Ibid., p. 134. [2] Ibid., p. 114.

ment of soul, under a sense of my own unworthiness."[1] She was careful to watch her "heart" to see whether she could passively accept the fact that God might use a minister other than her husband to "revive religion in this town."[2] As the experiences are recounted, the phrase "my strength failed me" or its counterpart occur again and again. Mrs. Edwards swooned away in pure mystical delight, "faint with joy. . . . contemplating the glories of the heavenly world."[3] In these experiences she found it possible to overcome the two obstacles which seemed to stand between herself and complete resignation to God and his will: "I felt an entire indifference to the opinions and representations and conduct of mankind respecting me; and a perfect willingness, that God should employ some other instrument than Mr. Edwards, in advancing the work of grace in Northampton."[4] At times there was the opposite effect of a strong experience; rather than a fainting or a swooning spell, she felt her "exercises" so intensely that she could not "forbear rising up and leaping with joy and exultation."[5] After hearing a hymn read aloud she felt she could "scarcely refrain from leaping with transports of joy." Describing the feelings experienced while in a mid-day service, she wrote

> When I heard [Mr. Williams] say, that <u>those who have assurance</u>, <u>have a foretaste of heavenly glory</u>, I knew

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[1] <u>Ibid.</u>, p. 173. [2] <u>Ibid.</u>, p. 175. [3] <u>Ibid.</u>, p. 177.
[4] <u>Ibid.</u>, p. 177 f. [5] <u>Ibid.</u>, p. 180.

> the truth of it from what I then felt; I knew that I then tasted the clusters of the heavenly Canaan: My soul was filled and overwhelmed with light, and love, and joy in the Holy Ghost, and seemed just ready to go away from the body. I could scarcely refrain from expressing my joy aloud, in the midst of the service. I had in the mean time, an overwhelming sense of the glory of God, as the Great Eternal All, and of the happiness of having my own will entirely subdued to his will. I knew that the foretaste of glory, which I then had in my soul, came from him, that I certainly should go to him, and should, as it were, drop into the Divine Being, and be swallowed up in God.[1]

Still another aspect of her experience needs to be mentioned. After an evening of intense religious feelings, she came to feel that she could not "judge or censure others, with respect to the state of their hearts, their sincerity, or their attainments in holiness," and she realized "in an unusual and very lively manner, how great a part of christianity lies in the performance of our social and relative duties to one another."[2]

iii. DEFENSE AND ANALYSIS OF EXPERIENTAL RELIGION

One of the the remarkable things in the history of the Church is the fact that most of the great creative theologians have also been great preachers, --or perhaps it might be better stated to say that they have been great theologians because they were great preachers. Edwards' first "Public Lecture" given in Boston on July 8, 1731, marks the real beginning of his career as a theologian. The sermon "God Glorified in Man's Dependence," was divided into three main sections: (i) The Redeemed have all their good of God; (ii) They are

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[1] Ibid., p. 180. [2] Ibid., p. 183.

also dependent on God for all, as they have all through him; and (iii) The redeemed have all their good in God. "We not only have it of him, and through him, but it consists in him; he is all our good."[1]

It is with the third section of the sermon that we wish to deal, to show how germinal it was to the later thought of Edwards, and at the same time, how much it reflects his own experience and that of his wife. God is the "highest good" of the saints, "they have none in heaven but God," he is "the light of the heavenly Jerusalem." Not only that, but the saints have a "spiritual excellency and joy by a kind of participation of God." "They are holy by being made partakers of God's holiness, Heb. xii:10. The saints are beautiful and blessed by a communication of God's holiness and joy, as the moon and planets are bright by the sun's light. The saint hath spiritual joy and pleasure by a kind of effusion of God on the soul."[2] God, in this sermon, is not conceived of, nor apprehended as, nor experienced as, over-powering Will, but as expansive and over-flowing Being. Man is dependent upon God, not because of a command of God, nor by a Divine fiat (Calvin's Law), but because "we have the greater occasion to take notice of God's all-sufficiency, when all our sufficiency is thus every way of him."[3] The result of this is that "the creature is nothing, and. . . .God is ALL." Edwards is certain that the thing God

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[1]Volume IV, pp. 169-179. [2]Ibid., p. 174.

[3]Ibid., p. 176.

aims at in the "affair of redemption" is that He should "appear all, and man nothing."[1] It is only in the "Use" derived from this doctrine that the full import of the topic of the sermon comes to light: "those doctrines and schemes of divinity that are in any respect opposite to such an absolute and universal dependence on God, do derogate from God's glory and thwart the design of the contrivance for our redemption."[2] The argument rests implicitly rather than explicitly upon a religion of contemplation of the Good, of passivity and receptivity in religion. God does all, since He is all--"God appears in the work of redemption as all in all. It is fit that he that is, and there is none else, should be the Alpha and Omega, the first and the last, the all, and the only, in this work."[3]

The second really great sermon that we have "excited uncommon interest in the hearers, and, at their request, was . . . .published."[4] The sermon, "A Divine and Supernatural Light, Immediately Imparted to the Soul, by the Spirit of God, shown to be both a Scriptural and Rational Doctrine," was delivered in 1734. Edwards set out to demonstrate that there was a Spiritual and Divine light, that it was immediately imparted to the soul by God, and that it was of a different nature from any that is obtained by natural means.[5] The first part of the sermon deals with what the Divine Light is not, the second

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[1] Ibid., pp. 176-177.
[2] Ibid., p. 177.
[3] Ibid.
[4] Dwight, op. cit., p. 121.
[5] Vol. IV, p. 439.

sets forth the spiritual and divine light, which he defined as "a true sense of the divine excellency of the things revealed in the word of God, and a conviction of the truth and reality of them thence arising."[1] To show what he means, he suggests that to be spiritually enlightened means not only to believe, but to have a sense of the thing in itself; it means having a sense of the "gloriousness of God" in the heart, it means having a sense of the "loveliness of God's holiness," it is "not only a speculatively judging that God is gracious, but a sense how amiable God is upon that account, or a sense of the beauty of this divine attribute."[2] Not only is there a difference between "speculative" and "spiritual" knowledge of a fact, but there are two ways of being convinced of truth. The heart of "natural man" is prejudiced against the "doctrines of the gospel" and refuses to admit the force of rational arguments, but the heart of the man who is the recipient of the divine light has an "intuitive and immediate evidence" of the "truth of the things of religion."[3] The Bible presents Christ, and affirms that He is holy and gracious, but the perception of "the excellency of Christ" comes about only thru the "immediate" operation of the Holy Spirit.[4] In addition to proving that the doctrine was sound and scriptural, this sermon attempted to make clear that the doctrine was a rational one. In one short, concise paragraph in the sermon, he set

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[1] Ibid., p 441. [2] Ibid., p. 441 f.

[3] Ibid., p. 443. [4] Ibid., p. 444.

forth clearly the province of reason. Reason is necessary in the total mental activity of apprehending spiritual things, in stating and understanding the doctrinal content of the Faith. "But," said Edwards, " if we take reason strictly, not for the faculty of mental perception in general, but for the ratiocination, or a power of inferring by arguments; I say, if we take reason thus, the perceiving of spiritual beauty and excellency no more belongs to reason, than it belongs to the sense of feeling to perceive colors, or to the power of seeing to perceive the sweetness of food."[1] It was upon this base, this definition of reason, and the belief in the existence of the Divine and Supernatural Light that the Edwardean defense of "Calvinism" rested.

It is necessary for a total understanding of Edwards and his thought to note that the tendency in his own religious experience, and the further tendency in his first two published sermons, was for an impersonal apprehension of the Divine Being--a term itself significant for its strict impersonalness. In the Shorter Catechism the fourth question asks "What is GOD?" and the answer is: "God is a Spirit, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable, in his being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness and truth." Whether this was the immediate cause of the impersonal way of thinking about God or not, it is a piece of evidence to show that there were roots within the New England tradition which made a place for a non-person-

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[1] Ibid., p. 448.

al interpretation and apprehension of God. The confrontation is not one of Will to will but rather the fundamental relationship of a Great Being to a small one. There is an element of impersonal disinterestedness which runs throughout the whole of Edwards' life, from the "Notes on Being" thru the Dissertation on the Nature of True Virtue.

In 1735 "Religion" had "come alive" to use the happy phrase of Dr. McGiffert.[1] Edward's interest in revivals has been noted in the letter he wrote to his sister; it was an enduring interest, one upon which the most fruitful part of his life was concentrated, and one which gave rise to the series of works about the nature of religion. His first work on the revivals, A Faithful Narrative of the Surprising Work of God, etc., was published in 1737. Edwards did not doubt but what it was a marvelous work of God. Northampton, he wrote, "seemed to be full of the presence of God: it never was so full of love, nor so full of joy; and yet so full of distress as it was then (1735)."[2] Not only was it a work of God, but an "extraordinary" work, by reason of its universality, "affecting all sorts, sober and vicious, high and low, rich and poor, wise and unwise";[3] by reason of the numbers who participated in it,[4] by the fact that it not only awakened but "regenerated" old and young alike,[5] and by the fact that it had

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[1] Op. cit., title of the third chapter.

[2] Volume III, p. 235. [3] Ibid., p. 238.

[4] Ibid., p. 238. [5] Ibid., p. 239.

such an influence upon the young--he mentions about thirty between the age of ten and fourteen who were affected.[1] This book was mainly descriptive, giving notice to the fact that there was a great diversity of reactions, "perhaps as manifold as the subjects of the operation"[2] but underlying it all there was a common element. From the point of view of his preaching, he remarked that

> I think I have found that no discourses have been more remarkably blessed, than those in which the doctrine of God's absolute sovereignty with regard to the salvation of sinners, and his just liberty, with regard to answering the prayers, or succeeding the pains of mere natural men, continuing such, have been insisted on. I never found so much immediate saving fruit, in any measure, of any discourses I have offered to my congregation, as some from those words, Rom. iii:19, "That every mouth may be stopped;" endeavoring to show from thence that it would be just with God forever to reject and cast off mere natural men.[3]

The narrative concluded with two "case studies," Abigail Hutchinson and Phebe Bartlet, and a short description for the reasons of the decline of the revival in Northampton. The role Edwards assumed in this short book was that of reporter and observer, noting the vast array of reactions of his parishoners to the Spirit of God, as He worked among them.

In his pastoral work with those who were under conviction, he had made it a practice to state that he felt the person in question had met the qualifications and had the true experience[4] when his own judgment was satisfied. He then

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[1] Ibid.

[2] Ibid., p. 240.

[3] Ibid., p. 245.

[4] Ibid., p. 250.

gave Scriptural rules and doctrines for them to apply to their own cases. In 1738 he preached a series of sermons which was much along this same line--the series was published a century later under the title Charity and Its Fruits. His first sermon in this series was based upon the doctrine that "All virtue that is saving, and that distinguishes true Christians from others, is summed up in Christian love." This love is nothing that appears in natural man; it is from God. "The nature of the Holy Spirit," said Edwards, "is love; and it is by communicating himself, in his own nature, to the saints, that their hearts are filled with divine charity. Hence we find that the saints are partakers of the divine nature, and Christian love is called the 'love of the Spirit' Rom. xv:30. . . ."[1] It is the work of this Spirit of Love that inclines men towards God and towards man; it makes men love both God and other men from the same motive--God is "loved for his excellency, and the beauty of his nature, especially the holiness of his nature; and it is from the same motive that the saints are loved, for holiness' sake."[2] Even reason teaches "that there is no sincerity in the obedience that is performed without love, for if there be no love, nothing that is done can be spontaneous and free, but all must be forced."[3] When it comes to delineating the true nature of faith, Edwards

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[1]Charity and Its Fruits, edited by Tyron Edwards (New York: Robert Carter & Brothers, 1852), p. 6.

[2]Ibid., p. 7 [3]Ibid., p. 15.

claimed that "true love is an ingredient in true and living faith, and is what is most essential and distinguishing in it."[1] The important thing to be noted in this sermon, and in the rest of the series, is that love as here expounded, is made the final test whereby "professors of Christianity. . . .may be taught as to their experiences, whether they are real Christian experiences or not."[2]

The revivals were challenged by those who decried the excesses of emotion and the general character of the revival method. The remaining works of Edwards are more directly apologetic and critical than was his Narrative. Confirmed by his own experience and that of his wife, that there was an essential soundness in the method and in the results, he proceeded to set forth the Distinguishing Marks of the Spirit of God (published in 1741). As a defender of revival-faith, he based his position upon the Scriptures; his first motive was to determine "What are no signs by which we are to judge of a work--and especially, what are no evidences that a work is not from the Spirit of God."[3] His main defense was that the Spirit is sovereign in its operations; where there are no direct contradictions to the "rules" laid out in the Scripture, man should not try to limit the work of the Spirit. He then proceeded to show that it is no sure mark that the works are not wrought by the Spirit if theminds of persons are extraordinar-

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[1] Ibid., p. 19. [2] Ibid., p. 31.

[3] Volume I, p. 526.

ily exercised;[1] if the bodies of men are given to "tears, trembling, groans, loud outcries, agonies of body, or the failing of bodily strength;"[2] nor if it causes "a great deal of noise about religion;"[3] nor if men's imaginations are impressed. Recalling Edwards' vivid experiences, we can understand his defense of the following:

> It is no argument that a work is not of the Spirit of God, that some who are the subjects of it have been in a kind of ecstasy, wherein they have been carried beyond themselves, and have had their minds transported into a train of strong and pleasing imaginations, and a kind of visions, as though they were rapt up even to heaven, and there saw glorious sights.[4]

Nor is it a demonstration that the product is not the fruit of the Spirit if men are moved by example--it is both reasonable, and attested to by Scripture;[5] nor is it to be questioned, as a whole, if some are "guilty of great imprudences and irregularities in their conduct."[6] Even when some who have participated in the general movement are misguided in Christian doctrine, and other forms of error, it is no sure sign that the work as a whole is not the fruit of the Spirit.[7] Altho some "fall away into gross errors, or scandalous practices,"[8] and ministers impress their congregations with the "terrors of God's holy law" with "a great deal of pathos and earnestness,"[9] it is no sure demonstration that the whole affair is not of

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[1] Ibid., p. 526. [2] Ibid., p. 526. [3] Ibid., p. 530.
[4] Ibid., p. 531. [5] Ibid., pp. 532-3. [6] Ibid., p. 534.
[7] Ibid., p. 535. [8] Ibid., p. 536. [9] Ibid., p. 537.

the Spirit of God. Edwards was particularly certain about the use of the motive of fear:

> Some talk of it as an unreasonable thing to fright persons to heaven; but I think it is a reasonable thing to endeavour to fright people away from hell. . . .The word fright is commonly used for sudden, causeless fear, or groundless surprise; but surely a just fear, forwhich there is good reason, is not to be spoken against under any such name.[1]

It is plain that in this essay Edwards was on the defensive and that he buttressed his position upon the two things which were sure and certain: right reason and the Scriptures. But the real motive for calling upon these foundations was that he had experienced the sweet ecstasy in his own religious exercises, and he had felt that there had been a genuine change in the life of the community of Northampton. Therefore he was willing to defend the revival as a whole, even admitting that all of the various objections were founded upon evidence which he would not deny. Limiting himself to the text with which he began the essay, (John iv:1) his "sure marks" are not very original, nor very striking. The first mark is that of accepting the Gospel declaration that Jesus is the Son of God;[2] (ii) When the Spirit "operates against the interests of Satan's kingdom, which lies in encouraging and establishing sin, etc. ." it is a true spirit;[3] (iii) When men have a "greater regard to the Holy Scriptures" and are convinced of the truth therein, it is certain that the work is that of God;[4] (iv) If the

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[1] Ibid., p. 538.

[2] Ibid., p. 539.

[3] Ibid., p. 540

[4] Ibid., p. 541.

spirit leads men to accept the truth, and things that are true, it is an evidence of the work of the Spirit;[1] and (v)."If the spirit that is at work among a people operates as a spirit of love to God and man, it is a sure sign that it is the Spirit of God."[2] In dealing with the problem of "speaking with tongues"--an aspect of "Spirit" religion which has occurred again and again in the history of the Church, Edwards wrote

> I had rather enjoy the sweet influences of the Spirit, showing Christ's spiritual divine beauty, infinite grace, and dying love, drawing forth the holy exercises of faith, divine love, sweet complacence, and humble joy in God, one quarter of an hour, than to have prophetical visions and revelations the whole year. . . .[3]

The tone of the essay is one of confirmed assurance that the affair had been an operation of the Spirit of God, and Edwards' attitude towards the critics was one of condescension. He was too honest not to admit that there were excesses, that not all of the work done had been done by the Holy Spirit; he could always point out that Satan was for ever thwarting men's purposes and forever deceiving them. But this was not the purpose of the essay--to admit excesses; it was the purpose of this work to validate the revival method and to stand forth for experiential religion.

In 1742 Edwards' third treatise upon the Great Awakening appeared--Thoughts on the Revival in New England. The tone is much like that of the preceeding treatise, except that it

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[1] Ibid., p. 542. [2] Ibid., p. 543.

[3] Ibid., p. 558.

is longer, was written after the revival of 1740 had come and gone. It, too, is a defense of the revival type of religious experience. Edwards devoted almost seven pages[1] to a paraphrase of his wife's experiences, and exclaims after having examined them that

> . . . .if such things are enthusiasm, and the fruits of a distempered brain, let my brain be evermore possessed of that happy distemper; If this be distraction, I pray God that the world of mankind may be all seized with this benign, meek, beneficent, beatifical, glorious distraction.[2]

But this work is more than a defense; it is a call to action. Edwards had spent time in studying the history of the church to note the periods of revivals; his correspondence always is marked by an observation upon the condition of religion in New England and in Europe. He felt that the time was about to begin for another great reformation in the church, that perhaps it was to begin in New England and sweep towards England and Europe.[3] He felt that there was

> abundant reason to hope that what is now seen in America and especially in New England, may prove the dawn of that glorious day: and the very uncommon and wonderful circumstances and events of this work, seem to me strongly to argue that God intends it as the beginning or forerunner of something vastly great.[4]

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[1]Volume III, p. 300 f. [2]Ibid., p. 306.

[3]"This new world is probably now discovered, that the new and most glorious state of God's church on earth might commence there; that God might in it begin a new world in a spiritual respect, when he creates the new heavens and new earth." Ibid., p. 315.

[4]Ibid., p. 316.

Turning now to the last of the books written on the Revivals, we see Edwards here as the "theologian" of the movement.[1] Anyone who reads this book will immediately note the correspondence it has with the sermon on "The Divine and Supernatural Light." Foster well says of this Treatise that "it may be regarded as the full presentation of the ideas which had formed the substance of the sermon upon illumination of 1734."[2] Edwards defines religion in the following manner:

> . . . .all true religion lies in holy love; and that in this divine affection, and an habitual disposition to it, and that light which is the foundation of it, and those things which are the fruits of ot. . . .[3]

a definition, which, says Dr. McGiffert, "alone would entitle Edwards to a prominent position among the philosophers of religion."[4]

The first two parts of the Treatise on Religious Affections contain little material which had not been incorporated in previous works; the second part in particular was a refinement of the definition of religion, a criticism of the various aspects of the Revival movement which had seemed at the time to be genuine, but which upon further consideration, were proved to be otherwise. One aspect of the work which differs from the other writings of the following period

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[1] McGiffert, op. cit., p. 69.

[2] Frank Hugh Foster, A Genetic History of the New England Theology (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1907), p. 57.

[3] Volume III, p. 11.

[4] Op. cit., p. 75.

is that he uses quotations and arguments from other authors very sparingly, and then only to butress a remark or argument of his own. He quotes Shephard's Parable of the Ten Virgins, Stoddard's Nature of Saving Conversions, Calvin's Institutes, Luther (indirectly from Rutherford's Display of the Spiritual Antichrist), Jones' treatise on the Canon of the New Testament, Shephard's Sound Believer, Flavel's Sacramental Meditations, Flavel's Touchstone of Sincerity, Ames' Cases of Conscience, Owen's treatise on the Spirit, Sibb's Bruised Reed, Preston's Church's Carriage, Stoddard's Way to Know Sincerity and Hypocrisy, Stoddard's Guide to Christ, and other works, but never in the body of the treatise--all of these come in the form of foot-notes. It would seem that his early method of thinking with his pen in hand, and his method of following out original insights, contributed a good deal to his position, which he made stronger by the use of authorities when they served this purpose.

The first thing Edwards did in the constructive part (Section III) was to make clear the distinction between "natural man" and "spiritual man." The truely "spiritual and gracious" affections which arise in the heart are the result of Divine activity, and nothing native to the "natural man." Edwards makes it clear that the term "spiritual" and "natural" are not to be thought of as two aspects of man's nature; rather, he says, "it is with relation to the Holy Ghost, or Spirit of God, that persons or things are termed spiritual in the New Testament."[1] Yet this alone is not sufficiently precise, be-

cause there are "common" and there are special influences of the Spirit on man's nature, the "special" alone having saving efficacy.[2] The Spirit may act upon the natural man, but He becomes a "divine supernatural spring of life and action" in the heart of the saint.[3] Altho the saints have a "participation of God" it does not mean that they are "made partakers of the essence of God, and so are godded with God, and christed with Christ."[4] Rather, it means that the saints are partakers of God's "Spiritual beauty and happiness."

There is an absolute difference in kind between the "spiritual" and the "natural" man; and because this is so, the "gracious exercises and affections which are wrought in the minds of the saints"[5] are absolutely different from the kind of exercises which influence the natural man. There is, in the mind of the saint, "some new sensation or perception. . . . which is entirely of a new sort, and which could be produced by no exalting, varying, or compounding of that kind of perceptions or sensations which the mind had before; or there is what some metaphysicians call a new simple idea."[6] Having established this fact, he goes on to say that "some things are common to gracious affections with other affections."[7] To illustrate the point he gives the example of two men, one capable of appreciating color but not taste, the other capable

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[1]Volume III, p. 66. [2]Ibid., p. 67.
[3]Ibid., p. 68. [4]Ibid., p. 69. [5]Ibid., p. 71.
[6]Ibid. [7]Ibid., p. 73.

of appreciating both color and taste. Both eat a piece of fruit which is beautiful and tasteful; both men desire the fruit, both may love the fruit for itself, but "the love and desire, and delight of the one, is altogether diverse from that of the other."[1]

Having made his position clear at this point, he goes on to show that many of the experiences which have commonly passed as spiritual experiences are no more than the natural faculties of men, functioning according to an orthodox statement, or to an experience which has been related to them. He takes up, for example, the problem of the imagination, particularly the experience of "spiritually seeing Christ:"

> Some have had impressed upon them ideas of a great outward light; and this they call a spiritual discovery of God's or Christ's glory. Some have had ideas of Christ's hanging on the cross, and his blood running from his wounds; and this they call a spiritual sight of Christ crucified, and the way of salvation by blood. Some have seen him with his arms open ready to embrace them, and shining ranks of saints and angels; and this they call seeing heaven opened to them. . . .And they look upon it a sufficient evidence that these things are spiritual discoveries, and that they see them spiritually because they say they do not see these things with their bodily eyes, but in their hearts.[2]

All these experiences, and others, are no more than what "natural" man can experience, and are not saving or "spiritual;" altho the ideas are unusual they "are not the better for that,"[3] nor do they call for any "peculiar, inimitable and

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[1] Ibid., p. 73. [2] Ibid., p. 75.

[3] Ibid., p. 76.

unparalleled exercise of the glorious power of God"[1]--even the Devil might bring forth such experiences!

The second main point to come under consideration is "the transcendently excellent and amiable nature of divine things as they are themselves; and not any conceived relation they bear to self, or self-interest."[2] The saints have a disinterested love of God; there were those who suggested that the original impulse of love to God was one of self-love, but, says Edwards, "I humbly suppose it is for want of consideration that they say so,"[3] for whence came the original idea that the contemplation and enjoyment of God was agreeable to man? It must have come from love itself; "a man must first love God or have his heart united to him; before he will esteem God's good his own, and before he will desire the glorifying, and enjoying of God as his happiness."[4] A love of God or love of Christ which arises from self-love, by definition, cannot be a holy affection, for self-love is the product of natural man's apprehension of values, whereas disinterested love is only the product of the "spiritual" nature of man. Edwards did not deny that self-love was the "foundation of a sort of love to God,"[5] but he did deny that it was a spiritual apprehension of God.[6] "The first foundation of the delight a true saint has in God, is his own perfection; and the first foundation of the delight he has in Christ, is his own beauty."[1]

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[1] Ibid., p. 77 [2] Ibid., p. 91. [3] Ibid., p. 92.
[4] Ibid. [5] Ibid., p. 94. [6] Ibid., p. 96.

The third step in building his full treatment of the nature of religious affections is that those "that are truly holy, are primarily founded on the loveliness of the moral excellency of divine things."[2] For the sake of "the more illiterate reader" he defines moral excellency as something more than conventional morality. When applied to God it means "those attributes which God exercises as a moral agent, or whereby the heart and will of God are good, right, and infinitely becoming andlovely; such as his righteousness, truth, faithfulness, and goodness; or, in one word, his holiness;"[3] and the saints "in the exercise of holy affections, do love divine things primarily for their holiness."[4] The spiritual man loves God first for His Holiness, and then secondarily for his natural attributes of power, etc. Hence, if men have only a love for, or apprehension of, the natural attributes, if they are overwhelmed by the majesty and the "aweful greatness" of God, they are not thereby experiencing God as a "spiritual" but as a "natural man."[5]

The fourth point Edwards makes is that "holy affections are not heat without light"[6]--gracious affections come as a result of an understanding of the divine. This spiritual understanding, as seen in distinction from speculative understanding, is " a sense of the heart, of the supreme beauty and sweetness of the holiness or moral perfection of divine things, together

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[1] Ibid., p. 98. [2] Ibid., p. 100. [3] Ibid., p. 101.
[4] Ibid., p. 102. [5] Ibid., p. 106. [6] Ibid., p. 108.

with all that discerning and knowledge of things of religion, that depends upon, and flows from such a sense."[1] The position Edwards takes here is close to that of Ritschl when the latter says "religion and theoretical knowledge are different functions of spirit, which, when they deal with the same objects, are not even partially coincident, but wholly diverge."[2] But Edwards, unlike Ritschl, made his division in the distinction between the two (natural and spiritual) spirits, and was not so skeptical as to say that they did not have the same object in view; it was rather that without the spiritual knowledge even the Bible "is left wholly a dead letter, a dry, lifeless, tasteless thing."[3] Without this special sense being the starting point in religion, all the religious activities of men are vain. It is upon this doctrine of natural and spiritual man that the rest of Edwards' system rests, and rests securely. Natural men may love God, may see a sort of beauty in Christ, may hate sin--but in the realm of the natural world all this is of no real benefit. Because this spiritual sense or knowledge is primarily a "taste or relish of the amiableness and beauty of that which is truly good and holy"[4] it follows that the saints have immediate intuitive knowledge of good and evil, of the holy and the unholy, without any train of reason or hesitation in choos-

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[1] Ibid., p. 112.

[2] Albrecht Ritschl, The Christian Doctrine of Justification and Reconciliation, trans. H. R. Mackintosh and A. B. Macaulay (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1900), p. 194.

[3] Volume III, p. 114. [4] Ibid., p. 118.

ing alternatives.[1] Left alone, this principle might prove to be ultimately dangerous, but Edwards safeguarded it with the statement that the spiritual taste must conform to the Bible, or at least "must be tried by [the word] and a right reasoning upon it."[2]

This is followed by the fifth characteristic of gracious affections in that they "are attended with a reasonable and spiritual conviction of the judgment of the reality and certainty of divine things,"[3] and by this Edwards means an immediate perception of the Divine things as they are in themselves. A conviction which rests upon education and the reasons of others differs not from the way the "Mohometans are strongly persuaded of the truth of the Mahometan religion."[4] Arguments and reasons which rest upon general observations and deductions from history are of no avail in this realm, and are not what Edwards has in mind; for him evidence is not external deduction raised to the point of positive knowledge. Rather, it is "a view of this divine glory directly" which "convinces the mind of the divinity of these things, as they glory is in itself a direct, clear, and all-conquering evidence of it."[5] It rests upon itself, as self-validating. The gospel would be foolishness to the unlearned, who could not make deductions "upon external evidence, and certainly would make the position of the poor Houssatunnuck Indian miserable in his attempt to become instructed in the

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[1] Ibid., p. 119. [2] Ibid., p. 120. [3] Ibid., p. 124.
[4] Ibid., p. 127. [5] Ibid., p. 129.

Christian religion."[1] No, the conviction which is strong enough to make one sell all he has does not come from reasoned propositions nor from arguments. Looking at his own time, he suggested that if reasoned argument would make men Christian, his time should have had great numbers of solid Christians--but the reverse was true![2] "The gospel of the blessed God does not go abroad a begging for its evidence, so much as some think,"[3] yet reason and arguments are not to be thrown out, for they may be used to waken the unbelievers. But more important still, those who have a spiritual view of the Bible and the truths of religion, also have a clearer use of speculative reason.[4]

The sixth general statement which can be said about true religious affections is that they are attended by "evangelical humiliation" which is defined as "a sense that a Christian has of his own utter insufficiency, despicableness, and odiousness, with an answerable frame of heart."[5] Edwards here makes the distinction between the "legal" and the "evangelical," the former being a product of the natural man. Evangelical humiliation is made one of the necessary elements of true religion: "they that are destitute of this have no true religion."[6] He describes humiliation in terms of a willingness to self-annihilation[7] and makes an analysis which reveals a keen understanding of the problem of human pride and self-

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[1] Ibid., p. 133 [2] Ibid., p. 134. [3] Ibid., p. 134.
[4] Ibid., p. 135. [5] Ibid., p. 137. [6] Ibid., p. 138.
[7] Ibid., p. 140.

righteousness.[1] After reading Edwards' analysis of pride there is small hope of feeling free of it, of ever attaining "evangelical" humiliation. An example of his searching and penetrating insight into the "heart" will show this:

> If you once have taken it in, that it is a bad sign, for a person to be apt to think himself a better saint than others, there will arise a blinding prejudice in your own favor; and there will probably be need of a great strictness of self-examination, in order to determine whether it be so with you. If on the proposal of the question, you answer, "No, it seems to me, none are so bad as I," do not let the matter pass off so; but examine again, whether or no you do not think yourself better than others on this very account, because you imagine you think so meanly of yourself. Have not you a high opinion of this humility? And if you answer again, "No, I have not a high opinion of my humility; it seems to me I am as proud as the devil;" yet examine again, whether self-conceit do not rise up under this cover: whether on this very account, that you think yourself as proud as the devil, you do not think yourself to be very humble.[2]

The end result of this self-examination leads to a lack of assurance, the exact opposite of the intention of Edwards and the system of thought which he was forging out of the revival experiences. The tension between human limitation and God's glory was not allowed to remain a tension endurable to the human frame--but was stretched to the point that New England turned away from it. Edwards demanded too much!

The seventh element is what Edwards calls a "change in nature."[3] This is one of the shorter and incomplete treatments in the book; the material he presented here had been presented before when he described the difference between the

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[1] Ibid., p. 142. [2] Ibid., p. 152. [3] Ibid., pp. 155-158.

natural and the spiritual man. Even after the resulting change in the saint, the influence of the "natural temper" remains; the saint is still under the temptation to sin, but knows that the particular sins of which he is liable, shall not have dominion over him.

The eighth element in true affections is that they "naturally beget and promote such a spirit of love, meekness, quietness, forgiveness and mercy, as appears in Christ."[1] "Christians," he says, "are Christlike; none deserve the name of Christians, that are not so in their prevailing character."[2] His delineation of Christian character in terms of being as a child is instructive (both as to his intention, and his picture of children who do not here seem to be so much depraved, as under the stern influence of a New England home):

> Little children are innocent and harmless; they do not do a great deal of mischief in the world; men need not be afraid of them; they are no dangerous sort of persons; their anger does not last long, they do not lay up injuries in high resentment, entertaining deep and rooted malice. . . .Little children are not guileful and deceitful, but plain and simple; they are not versed in the arts of fiction and deceit; and are strangers to artful disguises. They are yieldable and flexible, and not wilful and obstinate; do not trust to their own understanding, but rely on the instructions of parents, and others of superior understanding.[3]

If this were all, one would be tempted to say this is a distorted or at least an over-sentimentalized picture of Christian character; Edwards felt this objection before it was made by raising the question, "Is there no such thing as Christian

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[1] Ibid., p. 159. [2] Ibid., p. 159. [3] Ibid., p. 162.

fortitude, and boldness for Christ, being good soldiers in the Christian warfare, and coming out boldly against the enemies of Christ and his people?"[1] The answer was, of course, that there is a kind of Christian fortitude, which"consists in strength of mind, through grace, exerted in two things; in ruling and suppressing the evil and unruly passions, and affections of the mind; and in steadfastly and freely exerting, and following good affections and dispositions, without being hindered by sinful fear, or the opposition of enemies."[2] Edwards limited himself to the "more important war"[3] which exists between various parties contending for true and saving religion, and hence neither the pacifist nor the militarist can gain much support from the position here taken. He felt that pride and emotional qualities of fierceness, violence, sharpness, and bitterness displayed weakness rather than strength. These are dismissed as an indication of "pretended boldness for Christ,"[4] and he suggests that Christian character is best expressed in the ideas of forgiveness, love, and mercy.[5] In a forceful passage he states that he should be forced to "deny the Bible to be any thing of worth"[6] before admitting that Christian character as he had described it was false.

The next three "tests" can hardly be called new, nor different from some of the preceeding ones; number nine deals

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[1] Ibid. [2] Ibid.

[3] Volume III, p. 275.

[4] Volume III, p. 164. [5] Ibid., p. 164. [6] Ibid., p. 166.

with tenderness, number ten has to do with "beauty, symmetry, and proportion"[1] which is practically the same as saying that the Christian has a disinterested and accurate love and concern for all men as they deserve this love, and number eleven is that "the higher gracious affections are raised, the more is a spiritual appetite and longing of soul after spiritual attainments increased."[2]

But the twelfth one occupies a full fifth of the entire treatise and is the crowning and probably the most convincing test:

> Gracious and holy affections have their exercise and fruit in Christian practice--I mean, they have that influence and power upon him who is the subject of them, that they cause that a practice, which is universally conformed to, and directed by Christian rules, should be the practice and business of his life.[3]

Now the practice which Edwards had in mind is somewhat different from what the twentieth century liberal (or orthodox-radical) has in mind; for him it meant (i) that behaviour be consonant with "Christian rules;" (ii) that this be the main interest in life, and (iii) that it be the main business in life as long as the Christian lives.[4] Both Scripture and reason teach that Christian practice is the best test of religious affections. "Passing affections," says Edwards, "easily produce words; and words are cheap; and godliness is more easily feigned in words than it action. Christian practice is a costly,

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[1] Ibid., p. 171.
[2] Ibid., p. 178.
[3] Ibid., p. 182.
[4] Ibid.

laborious thing. . . .Hypocrites may much more easily be brought to talk like saints, than to act like them,"[1] Christian practice presupposes a profession of Christianity,[2] and it is at this point that practically the whole of the Westminster Confession is made the touchstone of Christianity.[3]

"I make it my rule to lay hold of light and embrace it, wherever I see it, though held forth by a child or an enemy" wrote Edwards in the preface to his Thought on the Revival of Religion in New England.[4] There are three distinctive things in Edwards' system to be observed in the Treatise we have been considering at length: (i) the fact that so much of the central affirmations seem to be but restatement of some of his own experiences; (ii) the fact that he drew freely upon the current psychology of the day and used it to explain his experiences; and (iii) the fact that it all fitted into the accepted Westminster Confession standards. Writing to Dr. Erskine in 1750, Edwards stated: "as to my subscribing to the substance of the Westminster Confession, there would be no difficulty."[5] Miss Winslow, in one of her many keen insights suggests that the experience at Yale, which led to the dismissal of Cutler, Johnson, and Browne, was one of the determining factors which made Edwards choose to defend orthodoxy for the rest of his life.[6] One must avoid trying to find in any one of these

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[1] Ibid., p. 196. [2] Ibid., p. 197. [3] Ibid., p. 198.
[4] Volume III, p. 276. [5] Dwight, op. cit., p. 412.
[6] Op. cit., p. 84.

sources or influences the determining factor in Edwards' development. The fact that he became engaged in the affair of propagating the orthodox faith, plus the fact that he had experienced the kind of religion which he wrote about, makes one feel that the skill in philosophy and psychology which he displayed were being used to defend a position already validated.

The precise relationship of his "mysticism" to his "Calvinism" will probably always remain a question to be solved. Frederick Ives Carpenter in his article on the "Radicalism of Jonathan Edwards" makes two interesting and provocative statements:

> Calvinism was merely an inherited cloak for his thinking, and often an ill-fitting one at that. In his youth he was innocent of it, and in his mature life he outgrew it, but always he thought it decent to wear in absence of another.[1]

> All of Edwards' work was founded on a psychology of mysticism, which was radically different from the theology of Calvinism. The relation of the two elements appears throughout the three chief periods of his life, but the victory of mysticism was achieved only in his final period.[2]

Now it seems to me that the first of these quotations must be put down to the price scholarship must pay for over-clever phraseology; but the second one is a matter for further interpretation. Probably Miss Winslow is nearer the truth when she says that "theology did not deny ecstasy. It merely

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[1] Frederick Ives Carpenter, "Radicalism of Jonathan Edwards", New England Quarterly IV, p. 631.

[2] Ibid., p. 633.

provided an explanation and made a place for visions in the orthodox scheme of things."[1] The question of mysticism is always a puzzeling one, but it seems to me that Perry Miller is more correct in naming the general stream of tradition out of which Edwards came the "Augustinian strain of Piety" and then stating that "it blazed most clearly and most fiercely in the person of Jonathan Edwards."[2] As for any "victory" of mysticism, it would seem that the dominating interest of the last period of Edwards' life was anything but one of mysticism. The book on Original Sin was the last one he wrote--and the work on the History of Redemption was next in Edwards'mind, a constant interest in his correspondence, and in his reading.[3]

The constructive period of his life and his work closed with his removal to Stockbridge. Up to this time he had been active ministering to the needs of the people; he had helped two great revivals in Northampton achieve international fame, and had acted as organizer for a larger revival movement in New England. During this period he had described, defended, and criticized "experiential" religion. Certainly the most constant source of his thought was the Bible, and in his later works, but notably in the sermons

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[1] Op. cit., p. 79 (referring to the experience Edwards had in 1721)

[2] Perry Miller. The New England Mind in the Seventeenth Century (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1939), p. 5

[3] cf. James Stillman Gaskey, Jonathan Edwards' Catalogue Typescript B. D. Dissertation, Chicago Theological Seminary, 1931, p. 18.

on "Charity and its Fruits" and the Treatise on Religious Affections, St. Paul was his guide. In both men there is a passionate longing after holiness and a severe criticism of all religious activity which failed to meet the qualification of Christian Love.

CHAPTER III

REASON AND EDWARDS' PHILOSOPHICAL APPROACH TO GOD

i. THE USE OF REASON:

a. Freedom of the Will.

In the study of the thought of Jonathan Edwards, a good deal of activity has centered around the problem of the source of his idealism, the problem of the source of his religious experience and his analysis of that experience. But one aspect of his thought which has not received sufficient attention is his almost complete break with Puritan Scholasticism and the tradition inherited from Peter Ramus. One would normally suppose that the thinking done in the village of Northampton, and later in Stockbridge, would be, to some extent, dependent upon the thought of the past century. And yet as one reads both the published works, and the notes meant for the eyes of Edwards alone, it becomes clear that Edwards lived in the contemporary thought world, dealt with the current ideas of his time, and had no recourse to the past.

An analysis of Edwards' Catalogue of Books makes this clear. Isaac Watts is mentioned fourteen times, Isaac Newton is mentioned eight times, John Locke six times, Ralph Cudworth five times, etc. As one would expect, four hundred

and fifty-two out of the six hundred and seventy-two entries in the Catalogue have to do with the general field of religion, and two hundred and seventy-nine of these have to do with theology. Caskey says that "the big interest, if it can be called a single interest, seems to relate to the magnum opus that he had in mind during the last half of his life."[1]

Helpful as the Catalogue is as a key to Edwards' interest, it is necessary to supplement it with the interests reflected in his correspondence. In a letter writted to the Rev. John Erskine, dated August 31, 1748, he noted the arrival of Taylor's Original Sin, Key to the Apostolic Writings, and his Paraphrase on the Epistle to the Romans. Edwards also stated that he had planned to write "so ething against some of the Arminian Tenmets" but had been deterred by the task of publishing Brainerd's Life. He continued:

> It might be of particular advantage to me, here in this remote part of the world, to be better informed what books there are, that are published on the other side of the Atlantic; and especially if there be any thing that comes out, that is very remarkable. I have seen many notable things, that have been written in this country against the truth, but nothing very notable on our side of the controversy. You would much oblige me, if you would inform me what are the best books that have lately been written, in defense of Calvinism.[2]

The further writing he had intended to do was once more delayed by the trouble in the Northampton Church, which, wrote

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[1] Op. cit., p. 18.

[2] Dwight, op. cit., p. 251.

Edwards to his correspondent Mr. Gillespie (April 2, 1750), "has proved not only a controversy between me and my people, but between me and a great part of New England."[1]

In a letter to Mr. Erskine (July 5, 1750), he noted that "the books you sent me, were entertaining to me, and some of them will be of advantage to me, if God should give me opportunity to prosecute the studies I had begun on the Arminian Controversy."[2] During the period of getting settled at Stockbridge there was little occasion to go back to the projected work. In a letter to Erskine, dated July 6, 1752, Edwards said "I hope now, in a short time, to be at leisure to resume my design, of writing something on the Arminian controversy" and continues:

> I have no thought of going through with all parts of the controversy. But the subject, which I intended, God willing, first to write something upon, was Freewill and Moral Agency; endeavoring, with as much exactness as I am able, to consider the nature of that freedom of moral agents, which makes them the proper subjects of moral government, moral precepts, councils, calls, motives, persuasions, promises, threatenings, praise and blame, rewards and punishments: strictly examining the modern notions of these things endeavoring to demonstrate their most palpable inconsistency and absurdity; endeavoring also to bring the last great objections and outcries against Calvinistic divinity, from these topics, to the test of strictest reasoning; and particularly that great objection, in which the modern writers have so much gloried, so long triumphed, with so great a degree of insult towards the most excellent divines. . . . that the Calvinistic notions of God's moral government are contrary to the common sense of mankind. In this essay, I propose to take particular notice of the writings of Dr. Whitby, and Mr. Chubb, and the writings of some others, who, though not proper-

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[1] Ibid., p. 287. [2] Ibid., pp. 405-406.

> ly Pelagians nor Arminians, yet, it their notions of the freedom of the will, have, in the main gone into the same scheme.[1]

The place to go, when attempting to understand Edwards thought, is his collection of Notes, written while he was still at Yale. Here we meet him as he came to terms with the bases of his later thought: the thought of Newton and the new physics, of Locke and the new philosophy, and of Shaftesbury and the new ethical thought of the age. In the note on LOGICK we find the following:

> One reason why, at first, before I knew other Logick, I used to be mighty pleased with the study of the Old Logick, way, because it was very pleasant to see my thoughts, that lay before my mind jumbled without any distinction, ranged into order and distributed into classes and subdivisions, so that I could tell where they all belonged, and run them up to their general heads. . . .[2]

This early delight in arranging thought-patterns in an impregnable system was a constant fact in Edwards' intellectual development. Altho he broke quite completely with "Old Logick," the projected book which we know by the "Notes on the Mind" covers much the same general scope of knowledge, but arranged from a different point of view.

Introspection was no new thing among the Puritan Divines; the constant habit of reexamining the soul made the mind, and its methods of functioning, a constant item for thought and study. And the youthful scholar at Yale, who had himself gone thru periods of religious exercises and had

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[1] Ibid., pp., 497-498. [2] Ibid., pp. 682-683.

come to examine them, soon saw the importance of understanding the "Mind." In his paragraph of introduction, we see his predisposition to deal with the "Inner World":

> Concerning the two worlds--the External and the Internal: the External, the subject of Natural Philosophy; the Internal, our own Minds. How the knowledge of the latter, is, in many respects, the most important. Of what great use, the true knowledge of this is, and of what dangerous consequence errours, here, are, more than in the other.[1]

Altho this projected work was never undertaken, the emphasis in it came out in his attempt to delineate Religious Affections and in his work on the freedom of the will.

The second projected major work, in the realm of physics, was not destined to play an important part in his further development. Yet, in the rules he set forth at the beginning of the "Notes on Natural Science" we find stated rules of procedure which can be observed in his weightiest argumentative works:

> 3. To have in the beginning, Definitions, as the definition of an Atom, or Perfect Solid. . . .etc.
> 4. Let there be Postulata: which let be either axioms, or principles, exceeding plainly deduced from them.

And then follows a series of rules which he intended to follow in writing:

> 1. Try not only to silence, but to gain.
> 5. Not to insert any disputable thing, or that will likely to be disputed by learned men; for I may depend upon it, they will receive nothing, but what is undeniable, from me; that is, in things exceedingly beside the ordinary way of thinking.
> 6. (in short hand)

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[1] Ibid., p. 664.

> 7. When I would prove any thing, to take special care that the matter be so stated, that it shall be seen, most clearly and distinctly, by every one, just how much I would prove; and to extricate all questions from the least confusion or ambiguity of words, so that the ideas shall be left naked.
> 8. In the course of reasoning, not to pretend any thing to be more certain, than every one will plainly see it is, by such expressions as,--It is certain, --It is undeniable--etc.
> 14. When the proposition allows it, let there be confirming Corollaries and Inferences, for the confirmation of what has been before said and proved.
> 15. Often times it suits the subject and reasoning best, to explain by way of objection and answer, after the manner of dialogue.
> 16. Always, when I have occasion, to make use of mathematical proofs. . . .[1]

Perry Miller[2] has made it clear that in the seventeenth century the New England Divines had almost unbounded trust in their ability to reason. The trust in analysis, in deductions, and in argumentation was a commonplace in Edwards' time, and his work Freedom of the Will is a highly ingenious piece of the use of reason in theological argumentation. A feature common to his two great works in the field of argumentative theology (Freedom of the Will and Original Sin), is what we should almost call a disproportionate attention to the matter of definitions. In the Freedom of the Will the entire first part has to do only with the definition of terms: the Will, the Determination of the Will, the meaning of the terms Necessity, Impossibility, Inability, Contingence, the distinction between natural and moral inability, and the

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[1] Ibid., pp. 702-703.

[2] Op. cit., chapter IV, "The Intellectual Heritage."

question of Liberty and moral Agency. In the second part of the discourse he sets up the Arminian position on the "self-determination of the Will" and proceeds to demonstrate that it is "repugnant to itself, and shuts itself wholly out of the world,"[1] by the analysis of antecedent volitions. After stating his position, he sets up an argument which might be given to disprove the case by suggesting that some might say there is no such a thing as antecedent volitions. He admits that "it is an evasion of my own inventing, and I do not know but I should wrong the Arminians, in supposing that any of them would make use of it. But it being as good a one as I can invent, I would observe upon it a few things."[2]

The first ten sections of the second part have to do with the problem of the Arminian contention for the "self-determining power of the Will," in which the arguments of Whitby and Chubb are taken, and upon examination, proved to be either self-contradictory in their principles, or manifestly wrong. A single example of the method employed may be found in the position of Whitby that the Will is moved by the Understanding. After examining the position, Edwards concludes that it makes a place for a "cause beside the Will, and a cause that does not proceed from, or depend on any act of the Will at all. Which at once utterly abolishes the Doctor's whole scheme of liberty, ... etc."[3] Up to this point in

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[1] Volume II, p. 22. [2] Ibid., p. 23.

[3] Ibid., pp. 50-51.

the book, all the argument has had to do with an examination of the Will and the Understanding; in the eleventh section of the second part he enters into the more formidable area of thought: God's foreknowledge and hence his control over actions of men. Edwards'first self-imposed task is to "prove, that God has an absolute, and certain foreknowledge of the free actions of moral agents."[1] The mode of argumentation here is almost by one divine attribute to another--except that Edwards had the Bible at hand to prove his point of God's prediction of events: "Positively to foretell is to profess to foreknow, or to declare positive foreknowledge."[2] Prediction is amply proved from the Bible: (i)"men's moral conduct and qualities. . . .have often been foretold by God;"[3] (ii) events--Israel going into Egypt;[4] (iii) the future moral conduct of nations;[5] (iv) prediction of the "great Antichristian apostasy";[6] (v) the entire question of the Messiah; and (vi) if God has no prescience "of the future actions of moral agents" then the Scriptural prophecies "are without foreknowledge."[7] The next three arguments are: without knowledge of the volitions of moral agents, God could not have foreknown the Fall of men and angels, nor the redemption of the world through His Son and the Church; God would be forced to repent because He could not control or ever know the

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[1] Ibid., p. 61. [2] Ibid. [3] Ibid., p. 62.
[4] Ibid., p. 63 [5] Ibid. [6] Ibid., p. 65.
[7] Ibid., p. 67.

activities of men and kingdoms. The last argument is that without foreknowledge, God must be constantly changing his mind--which brings up the ironical comment "The Supreme Lord of all things must needs be under great and miserable disadvantages, in governing the world which he has made and has the care of, through his being utterly unable to find out things of chief importance, which, hereafter shall befall his system; which, if he did but know, he might make seasonable provision for."[1]

After having lined these argument up, Edwards asks "But how do these things consist with reason, or with the word of God?" It is here that the Word of God is consulted first and read as a textbook in metaphysics, to prove God's foreknowledge, immutability, and "unchangeable with regard to his purposes." The fundamental premise of Edwards' thought always can be found in his philosophical idea of God, which he felt corresponded exactly with the statements in the Bible. There is never a line in all of Edwards' Works which suggests that God is less than Absolute Perfection, and all the major works of his life are but derivative ideas or specific explanations of the meaning of this prior fact. The most solid argumentative sections of Freedom of the Will rest upon this assumption--once it is granted, and especially granted by his opponents, the logical persistency of Edwards' mind crushes opposition, and thereby does achieve the aim of "try not only

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[1]Ibid., p. 71.

to silence, but to gain." This is made especially clear in the concluding paragraph in the twelfth section of the second part:

> . . . .all arguing from Necessity, against the doctrine of the inability of unregenerate men to perform the conditions of salvation, and the commands of God requiring Spiritual duties, and against the Calvinistic doctrine of efficacious grace; I say, all arguing of Arminians (such of them as own God's omniscience) against these things, on this ground, that these doctrines, though they do not suppose men to be under constraint or coaction, yet suppose them under Necessity, with respect to their moral actions, and those things which are required of them in order to their acceptance with God; and their arguing against the Necessity of men's volitions, taken from the reasonableness of God's commands, promises, and threatenings, and the sincerity of his counsels and invitations; and all objections against any doctrines of the Calvinists as being inconsistent with human liberty, because they infer Necessity; I say, all these arguments and objections must fall to the ground, and be justly esteemed vain and frivolous, as coming from them; being maintained in an inconsistence with themselves, and in like manner levelled against their own doctrine, as against the doctrine of the Calvinists.[1]

Another approach to the problem of theological argument, which is to be found again and again in Edwards' argumentative works, takes the form of admitting that the problem under consideration remains, whether it be in the Calvinistic or in the Arminian system of thought. There is at least this much candidness in his approach--when faced with what seems to be an ultimate fact of experience, he demands that others face it with him. In Part IV, section ix, we have a good example of this. The problem is that the system propounded

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[1] Ibid., p. 81.

by Edwards seems to make God the Author of Sin. Whitby raised the ancient argument that such a system takes away all moral initiative, and makes men refuse to take responsibility for their actions, under the guise that since God actually controls them, they can do nothing about it. Edwards does not completely deny the force of the objection, but retorts that the Arminians face the same difficulty--at least those who admit the fact of God's foreknowledge. He suggests

> . . . .this supposed difficulty ought not to be brought as an objection against the scheme which has been maintained, as disagreeing with the Arminian Scheme, seeing it is no difficulty owing to such disagreement; but a difficulty wherein the Arminians share with us. That must be unreasonably made an objection against our differing from them, when we should not escape or avoid at all by agreeing with them.[1]

Just as Edwards made up arguments to test his central thesis in the beginning of the work, in the latter part he made an attempt to meet all possible objections--objections of obviously different strength. For example, he takes the charge that his system is charged with leading to Atheism and Licentiousness, and retorts that "I am persuaded the Arminians would not look upon it just, that their notion of freedom and contingence should be charged with a tendency to all the errors that ever any embraced, who have held such opinions."[2] This is the first part of the answer; the second is that only by the doctrine of necessity can we prove the existence of God--hence to urge a doctrine of contingence is to give support

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[1] Ibid., p. 156. [2] Ibid., p. 169.

to atheism! and the third argument is that really it is the Arminian notion which leads to licentiousness because it has no necessary connection between a choice and the will.[1] But Edwards saves his best argument until the end of the section. He goes to the present condition of religion in New England, where the opposing doctrine is gaining and in full sway. He comes to the point when he says

> It is remarkable that this happy remedy (discovered by the free inquiries and superior sense and wisdom of this age) against the pernicious effects of Calvinism, so inconsistent with religion, and tending so much to banish all virtue from the earth, should on so long a trial, be attended with no good effect, but that the consequence should be the reverse of the amendment; that in proportion as the remedy takes place, and is thoroughly applied, so the disease should prevail, and the very same dismal effect take place, to the highest degree, which Calvinistic doctrines are supposed to have so great a tendency to, even the banishing of religion and virtue, and the prevailing of unbounded licentiousness of manners. If these things are truly so, they are very remarkable, and matter of very curious speculation.[2]

The methods described so far, seem to be totally in the realm of logical and argumentative wit. This last example comes the closest to that of a "case study" and it is obviously the biased view of one whose intermittent correspondence with writers on the other side of the Atlantic shows an overwhelming interest in the revivals of the world, wherever they occurred. Fortunately (or is it unfortunately?) Edwards did not go on to suggest here that God must obviously prefer the Calvinistic Scheme as over against the Arminian, because of

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[1] Ibid., p. 170. [2] Ibid., p. 171.

the present "state of Zion." The book was written in a short time, (four and one-half months), "and those," wrote Dwight, "not months of leisure, but demanding the additional duties of a parish, and of two distinct Indian missions, and presenting also, all the cares, perplexities and embarrassments of a furious controversy, the design of which was to deprive the author, and his family, of their daily bread."[1]

Clarence Faust suggests that "Edwards had read widely on the subject, as well as thought deeply about it."[2] The references to other books, either in the body of the Text or in foot-note references reveals really few books which were directly consulted. On Edwards' side of the argument there is, of course, Locke's Human Understanding, the one single author who probably influenced Edwards' total thought the most. On the Arminian side there wad Dr. Whitby's Book on the Five Points, Dr. Samuel Clarke's Demonstration of the Being and Attributes of God, Dr. Turnbull's Christian Philosophy, Mr. Chubb's Collection of Tracts on various Subjects, (especially section x, Part I), Dr. Stebbing's[3] Treatise on the Operations of the Spirit, Scripture Doctrine of Original Sin, Essay on the Freedom of the Will in God and in the Creature, In quiry into the Nature of the Human Soul and Turnbull's Principles of Moral Philosophy. Of these, the

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[1] Op. cit., p. 533. [2] Op. cit., p. xliii.

[3] "an author that has lately made a mighty noise in America." Volume II, 121.

brunt of the argument is shared by Chubb and Whitby; Locke was used by Edwards primarily in the central definition of Will, in the principle of causality, and the general position of Power.

The fourth part of the book has to deal with general objections, and general points central to the argument, in which Edwards was content to use the term Arminians and Calvinists rather than name specific authors (with, the exception, of course, that Whitby is constantly used as an opponet).

One of the central underlying principles in Edwards' thought, as revealed in his Notes on the Mind, was that "to find out the reasons of things, in Natural Philosophy, is only to find out the proportion of God's acting."[1] This assumption made it possible for him to go into the realm of physics for an illustration, if it would suit his purpose, and shows Edwards' trust in the newer physical sciences. In his early notes he had reached the same conclusions thru philosophy as thru physics, and this early conviction remained with him even in his later days when he had little time or inclination to go into the books in the field. Starting with the problem of what keeps atoms apart, and, more important still, what keeps them together once their surfaces touch, he concluded that "it is God himself, or the immediate exercise of His power, which keeps the parts of the atoms, or two bodies

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[1]Dwight, op. cit., p. 669.

tending by surfaces, together. . . . . Since the exercise of the infinite power of God is necessary to keep the parts of atoms together; and since. . . .the dissolution of them would be annihilation; it follows that the constant exercise of the Infinite power of God is necessary to preserve bodies in being."[1] From this same line of reasoning he continued

> Hence also an incontestable argument for the being, infinite power, and omnipresence of God:--of the two latter, inasmuch as we see that Infinite power is actually exerted in an infinite number of places at once, even in every part of every atom of the universe; and since that, where his power is exercised, there his essence must be, his essence can be by nothing excluded.[2]

In the same proposition he developed the following two corollaries:

> . . . .the substance of bodies at last becomes either nothing, or nothing but the Deity, acting in that particular manner, in those parts of speace where he thinks fit; so that, speaking most strictly, there is no proper substance but God himself. We speak at present with respect to Bodies only: how truly then is he said to be Ens entium.
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> . . . .we clearly see that the Creation of the corporeal Universe is nothing other, than the first causing resistance in such parts of space as God saw fit, with a power of being communicated successively, from one part of space to another, according to such stated conditions, as his infinite wisdom directed, and then the first beginning of the communication, so that ever after it might be continued, without deviating from those stated conditions.
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> Hence we see what are those, which we call the Laws of Nature, in bodies, viz., the stated methods of God's acting with respect to bodies, and the stated conditions of the alternation of the manner of his acting. . . .Hence we learn, that there is no such thing as Mechanism.[3]

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[1] Ibid., p. 712-713. [2] Ibid., p. 713. [3] Ibid., pp. 713-714.

These particular arguments, or forms of arguments do not find expression in the later argumentative treatises, yet in the Freedom of the Will we find another kind of argument, based upon physics, to demonstrate that "it would be unreasonable to suppose, that God made one atom in vain, or without any end or motive."[1] The point to be noticed is that altho Edwards himself came to terms with the scientific knowledge of his time, he did not go on to make it an integral part of his system, and one may well question, I think, the statement made by Hornberger that

> Edwards. . . .accomplished what Samuel Johnson, Berkeley's disciple failed to do. He succeeded in turning back for a large number of Americans and over a considerable length of time, the tide of materialism to which the new science in some measure contributed. And Edwards accomplished this pious work not by attacking science, as Johnson and the Hutchinsonians tended to do, but by utilizing it, by implicit confidence that the study of natural things is "the discovery of the proportion of God's acting. . . ."[2]

Actually Edwards was but in the stream of New England thought and tradition. Miller suggests in his chapter on "Nature" that

> The universe was to be studied and expounded because it was the providence of God in operation; the essential requirements for the study of physics were a disposition to see God's hand in events, a perception of the identity of natural order and divine decree, an ability to read the analogy between spiritual law and natural laws, and a faith in the fundamental perfection of the plan of creation. These were the goals of Puritan thinking in the natural sciences; there was only incidental concern about whether the universe were expound-

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[1] Volume II, p. 153.

> ed according to the old or the new astronomy, whether by Peripatetic or Newtonian physics. . . .[1]

Altho the Puritan Divines and Edwards would probably have denied it, they assumed that which Anselm had made explicit: I do not seek to understand that I may believe, but I believe in order to understand. For this also I believe,--that unless I believed, I should not understand. Edwards carried on the intellectual tradition in New England in his attitude towards the "new science" and the new learning mainly because of his prior certitude in the realm of faith and his trust in his ability to reason correctly.

b. Original Sin.

As a theologian, then, Edwards did not go out of his way to use arguments from other realms. He argued within the bounds of the field of theology. One of the clearest examples of this is to be found in the first part of his book on Original Sin Defended. In his Preface he made it clear that his intention is to do two things: to defend the Doctrine in general, and to defend it against "two late Writers, Dr. Turnbull and Dr. Taylor. . . .but especially the latter. . . . I have closely attended to Dr. Taylor's Piece on Original Sin, in all its Parts, and have endeavored that no one thing there said, of any consequence in this Controversy, should

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[2] Theodore Hornberger, "The Effect of the New Science Upon the Thought of Jonathan Edwards," American Literature, IX, 1937, p. 207.

[1] Op. cit., p. 216.

pass unnoticed, or that any thing which has the appearance of an Argument, in opposition to this Doctrine should be left unanswered."[1] He set out to see "whether we have any evidence that the heart of man is naturally of a corrupt and evil disposition."[2] There follows a statement which almost makes one feel that we are on the verge of an important empirical inspection:

> The way we come by the idea of any such thing as disposition or tendency is by observing what is constant or general in event; especially under a great variety of circumstances. . . .[3]

He quoted Dr. Turnbull to the effect that "upon a fair computation, the fact does indeed come out, that very great villanies have been very uncommon in all ages, and looked upon as monstrous; so general is the sense and esteem of virtue."[4] The reply is that there is but one consideration "that is of great importance in this controversy,"--when a survey of natural history is made, no recognition of the "interposition of divine grace" is taken into account. This, when acknowledged, means that when Edwards speaks of

> an evil tendency of things, belonging to the present nature and state of mankind, understand me to mean their tendency as they are in themselves, abstracted from any consideration of that remedy the sovereign and infinite grace of God has provided.[5]

He set forth to prove two things: (i) the "fact that all mankind come into the world in such a state, as without fail comes

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[1]Volume II, p. 307. [2]Ibid., p. 309.

[3]Ibid., p. 310. [4]Ibid. [5]Ibid., p. 313.

to this issue, namely the universal commission of sin" and (ii)"all sin deserves and exposes to utter and eternal destruction, under God's wrath and curse."[1] And, for evidence, he says that "both. . . .can be abundantly demonstrated to be agreeable to the word of God, and to Dr. Taylor's own doctrine."[2] The doctrine is found in the Word of God, and agreeable to Taylor's own words--hence proof! Anyone who has read but one of the Notes on the Mind or Natural Science will see that here we have but one more example of his skill in "abstracting" elements which the modern mind is hesitant to follow. Modern empiricism would be on the side of Dr. Turnbull atthis stage of the argument, that it is impossible to abstract the idea of "original nature" in such a way as to prove that by itself it is either one thing or another. Yet one hesitates to pass judgment upon Edwards, remembering that modern secular liberalism, the inheritor of Turnbull's thesis, has long posited the idea of a "plastic" nature which is guilty of the method of abstraction just as Edwards' method was.

Again, thinking we are on the verge of an empirical inspection of the state of children and their tendency to sin, we turn to the fourth section of the discourse. He Edwards suggests

> If there are any in the world, though but lately become capable of acting for themselves, as subjects of the law of God, who are perfectly free from sin, such are most likely to be found among the children of Christian parents, who give them the most pious

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[1] Ibid., p. 314. [2] Ibid.

education, and set them the best examples. . . .[1]

But he immediately suggests that if this be so, it must have been even more so in the primitive church (the age of the Church's greatest purity) and when he finds in I John 1:8 the statement that all are guilty of having sinned--he finds there perfect proof that not even in the pristine purity of the church were children without sin--therefore another proof of the general argument.

It is extremely difficult for us to grasp the idea of history which Edwards had, and as a matter of fact, the idea of history which his thought world had. When he speaks of, or writes upon, history, he generally has in mind that period covered in the Bible--and Biblical history meant world history. In his incomplete and certainly unfinished work A History of The Work of Redemption, his divisions betray what we should think to be an obvious defect: I. From the Fall to the Incarnation. II. From Christ's Incarnation to his Resurrection. III. From Christ's Resurrection to the End of the World. When one counts the space allotted to these three divisions, the most complete exposition takes place in the first grand section. As his correspondence abroad shows, his main interest was in the "state of Zion" and the great outpouring of God's Spirit. His late interest had to do with the general problem of scriptural prophecy, just as his series of sermons preached in 1739, had rested upon this same

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[1] Ibid., pp. 326-327.

topic, and in his own mind it is quite clear that he considered all his work on the Revivals as dedicated to that end. But, properly speaking, his published works in this field never reached the point where he was willing to do argumentative battle.

Although there are traces that in his general dealings with men, and with ideas--certainly those ideas which he laid out for himself for further study when he was a student at Yale--which makes one inclined to think that Edwards had an experimental mind, that he was willing to make deductions from observations, it remains that this was not the case. He had a mighty argument built up in each of the two great works which deserve the title of "argumentative theology." In both of them he rested contented when he felt he had dealt with the ideas of his opponents. He did not attempt to build a rational statement about God, prove his existence, nor set forth a general theoretical statement. He assumed rather, that God was in complete control of the world and of men's volitions. Yet the general tendency of the two works we have gone in to lead to the idea of God as Being rather than the idea of God as Will, altho the central issue in both of them had to do more with the doctrine of man than with the doctrine of God; the former he made explicit, while the latter was always implicit.

ii. REASON AND THE PROBLEM OF EVIL.

The ultimate test of any idea of God is to be found

in its answer or approach to the problem of Evil. As we shall see, Edwards tried various approaches to the problem, but found none which actually satisfied his sense of logic and at the same time his profound conviction that evil is evil. In the main, Edwards shared the dominant conviction of his century, summarized by Lovejoy as follows:

> The essence of the optimist's enterprise was to find the evidence of the "goodness" of the universe not in the paucity but rather in the multiplicity of what to the unphilosophic mind appeared to be evils.[1]

Lovejoy goes on to suggest that the system of thought put forth by William King in his De origine mali (1702) was "the earliest, and perhaps, when both its direct and indirect influence are considered, the most influential, of eighteenth-century theodicies."[2] King's essential answer to the problem of evil was arrived at through the use of the principle of plentitude--as Lovejoy summarizes it:

> There is inherent in the divine essence, as an element in God's perfection, a special attribute of "goodness," which make it necessary that all other and less excellent essences down to the very lowest--so far as they are severally and jointly possible--shall have actual existence.[3]

This is the general "Platonistic" solution to the problem, although not properly a solution given by Plato himself.

Samuel Clarke, the leading English philosopher of the first quarter of the eighteenth century, summed up the various forms of Evil as follows:

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[1] Op. cit., p. 211. [2] Ibid., pp. 211-212. [3] Ibid., p. 215.

> All that we call Evil, is either an Evil of imperfection, is the Want of certain Faculties and Excellencies which other Creatures have; or Natural Evil, as Pain, Death, and the like; or Moral Evil, as all kinds of Vice.[1]

He then goes on to "explain away" the origin of these three forms. The first is not properly evil, since the Creator, in His freedom, bestowed upon all creatures certain limitations. "'Tis plain," said Clarke, that

> the Want of any certain Faculty or Perfection in any kind of creatures, which never belong'd to their Nature, is no more an Evil to Them, than their never having been created or brought into being at all. . . .[2]

The second type of "evil" follows directly from the first--death to a creature who was never given immortality is no evil. As to the third type, "this arises wholly from the abuse of Liberty, which God gave to his Creatures for other Purposes, and which 'twas reasonable and fit to give them for the Perfection and Order of the whole Creation: Only they, contrary to God's Intention and Command, have abused what was Necessary for the Perfection of the whole, to the Corruption and Depravation of the whole, to the Corruption and Depravation of themselves."[3] Therefore, reasoned Clarke, God is absolved from any connection with the problem of evil as man encounters it. Of course Edwards could not use this last argument, for he differed with Clarke upon the consequence

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[1]Samuel Clarke, A Discourse Concerning the Being and Attributes of God, (8th ed., London: James and John Knapton, 1732), p. 108.

[2]Ibid., p. 108. [3]Ibid.

of Divine Foreknowledge, and therefore denied the "Liberty" which the near-deism of Clarke seemed to posit.

King's central affirmation of the principle of plenitude led him to the point where he could say

> 'Tis plain that in his present circumstances he [man] cannot have them [wings], a pefection granted to birds, and that the use of them would be very mischievous to society; and yet the want of them necessarily exposes us to many inconveniences. . . .A thousand instances may be given where the evil of imperfection necessarily subjects us to disappointment of appetite, and several other natural evils, which yet are all necessary for the common good.[1]

Leibnitz, who followed this general train of thought, could go so far in his praise of diversity in creation as to say:

> The moral or physical good or evil of rational creatures does not infinitely transcend the good or evil which is purely metaphysical, that is to say, the good which consists in the perfection of the other creatures. . . .No substance is either absolutely precious or absolutely contemptible in the sight of God. It is certain that God attaches more importance to a man than to a lion, but I do not know that we can be sure that he prefers one man to the entire species of lions.[2]

So far as we know, Edwards had read neither King nor Leibnitz, but he had read both Samuel Clarke and Joseph Butler.[3] Butler's Analogy provides us with a clue, I think, to one of the contemporary sources from which Edwards drew support in his general consideration of the problem of the secret and revealed Will. The seventh chapter of the first part of the

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[1] Origin of Evil, quoted by Lovejoy, op. cit., p. 216.

[2] Theodicee, #118, quoted by Lovejoy, op. cit., p. 225.

[3] Cf. Caskey, op. cit., Appendix B.

Analogy deals with one of the problems which Edwards had in mind--the problem of making Divine Government consonant with Justice and Goodness. Butler suggested that

> . . . .the analogy of [God's] natural government suggests, and makes it credible, that his moral government must be a scheme quite beyond our comprehension; and this affords a general answer to all the objections against the justice and goodness of it. . . .[1]

After suggesting that it is highly probable that the natural world is subservient to the moral, and that there is a credible basis for believing that there is an analogous relationship between the two worlds, he went on to say that

> every act of divine justice and goodness may be supposed to look much beyond itself and its immediate object; may have some reference to other parts of God's moral administration, and to a general moral plan; and that every circumstance of this his moral government may be adjusted beforehand with a view to the whole of it. . . .All particular instances of divine justice and goodness, and every circumstance of them, may have such respects to each other, as to make up altogether a whole, connected and related in all its parts; a scheme, or system, which is as properly one as the natural world is, and of the like kind. And supposing this to be the case, it is most evident that we are not competent judges of this scheme, from the small parts of it which come within our view in the present life; and therefore no objections against any of these parts can be insisted upon by reasonable men.[2]

Although Edwards had great confidence in his own reasoning power, he did not attempt to solve the problem faced by Butler, Clarke, and the other natural theologians. He stood

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[1]Joseph Butler, The Analogy of Religion (30th ed., New York: Mark H. Newman & Co., 1848), pp. 123-124.

[2]Ibid., p. 125.

firmly within the tradition of Augustinian Piety, and attempted to come to terms with the internal problems of his system. In a letter to Mr. Gillispie (Sept. 4, 1747) he "versified" Romans 8:20 (All things shall work together for good to them that love God). The first thing Edwards made clear was "There is a certain measure of holiness and happiness, to which each one of the elect is eternally appointed, and all things that relate to him, work together to bring to pass this appointed measure of good."[1] Even sin is seen to be, in the final analysis, for the good of the Christian:

> through the sovereign grace and infinite wisdom of God, the fact that they have been sinful, fallen, creatures, and not from the beginning perfectly innocent and holy as the elect angels, will issue in a high advancement of their eternal happiness; and that they shall obtain some additional good, on occasion of all the sin of which they have been the subjects, or have committed, beyond what they would have had, if they never had been fallen creatures.[2]

At a later section in the letter he suggests that God "is carrying on a design of love to each individual christian" which "is only just what it is, and is not different from itself; and to fulfil this particular design of love, every thing which God does, or in any respect disposes, whether it be positive, privative or negative, contributes; because doubtless, every thing which God does, or in any respect offers, tends to fulfil his aims and decrees."[3] This bulwark

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[1] Dwight, op. cit., p. 237. [2] Ibid., p. 239.

[3] Ibid., p. 240.

against the seemingly arbitrariness of Providence appears numerous times in the letters Edwards wrote to friends and members of his family.

He was well aware that his system raised difficulties, and in his section in Freedom of the Will he attempts to answer the objection that his system makes God the author of sin. He makes it clear that if God be "permitter, or not a hinderer of sin" or "a disposer of the state of events. . . . for wise, holy and most excellent ends and purposes," then he is willing to admit that in this sense God is the author of sin. But, if it means that God be the "actor of sin" or the "doer of a wicked deed" then he denies that God is the author of sin. From the Scripture he brings forth cases from the Pharoah in Exodus to the crucifixion of Christ, and after two pages of scriptural illustrations, says

> it is certain and demonstrable from the Holy Scriptures as well as the nature of things, and the principles of the Arminians, that God permits sin, and at the same time, so orders things in his Providence, that it certainly and infallibly will come to pass, in consequence of his permission.[1]

To make his case clear, that this mode of behavior does not make God the doer of sin, he used the analogy of the sun:

> If the sun were the proper cause of cold and darkness, it would be the fountain of these things, as it is the fountain of light and heat; and then something might be argued from the nature of cold and darkness, to a likeness of nature in the sun; and it might be justly inferred, that the sun itself is dark and cold, and that its beams are dark and frosty. But from its being the cause no otherwise than by its departure

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[1]Volume II, p. 159.

> no such thing can be inferred, but the contrary; it may justly be argued, that the sun is a bright and hot body, if cold and darkness are found to be the consequences of its withdrawment; . . . . . So, inasmuch as sin is not the fruit of any positive agency or influence of the Most High, but, on the contrary, arises from the withholding of his action and energy, and, under certain circumstances necessarily follows on the want of his influence; this is no argument that he is sinful, or his operation evil, or has any thing of the nature of evil, but on the contrary, that He and his agency are altogether good and holy, and that He is the fountain of all holiness.[1]

The next argument Edwards produced was that it was a fit and proper thing for the "Supreme and Absolute Governor of the Universe" to put the management of good and evil under His power. As a matter of fact, "it is so far from being unholy in him to undertake this affair, that it would rather have been unholy to neglect it."[2] The assumption here, which we shall take up later, is that good and evil are both necessary. Here Edwards is arguing that it is better that both be under the government of God, than left to Chance.

The following statement is still another attempt to bring into a rational scheme the problem that not all evil seems to be actually so:

> God may will the disposal of such an event, and its coming to pass for good ends, and his Will not be an immoral or sinful Will, but a perfectly holy Will. . . . . Sin may be an evil thing, and yet that there should be such a disposal and permission, as that it should come to pass, may be a good thing.[3]

He leans rather heavily upon the Secret and Revealed Will of God for his argument; it is not inconsistent, he maintains,

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[1] Ibid., p. 160. [2] Ibid., p. 161. [3] Ibid.

in the Being of God, that his secret and revealed will should be working for different goals in the same action, as for example, in the Death of Christ--an act which was proscribed by the revealed Law, an evil in itself; yet, in the counsels of God's Secret Will, it was a positively good thing.

His next attack, which is quite distinct from the Calvinistic answer given, is rationalistic. "I believe," said Edwards,

> there is no person of good understanding, who will venture to say, he is certain that it is impossible it should be best, taking in the whole compass and extent of existence, and all consequences in the endless series of events, that there should be such a thing as moral evil in the world.[1]

He felt that with this argument he had forced the Arminian divines to admit as much as the Calvinistic scheme of the two wills in the Divine Nature. As a matter of fact, he came curiously close to admitting two different principles at work in the very nature of God, under the title of the two wills. He stated three "plain truths" which would not be questioned by any:

> 1. That God is a perfectly happy Being, in the most absolute and highest sense possible.
> 2. That it will follow from hence, that God is free from every thing that is contrary to happiness, and so, that in strict propriety of speech, there is no such thing as any pain, grief, or trouble in God.
> 3. When any intelligent being is really crossed disappointed, and things are contrary to what he truly desires, he is the less pleased or has less pleasure, his pleasure and happiness is diminished and he suffers what is disagree-

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[1] Ibid., p. 162.

> able to him, or is the subject of something that is of a nature contrary to joy and happiness, even pain and grief.

Now, if it will not be admitted that there be no distinction between God's hatred of sin, and His Will, then, because of His infinite hatred of sin, and subsequent displeasure when sin occurs, the only alternative is to say that "He must be infinitely crossed, and suffer infinite pain, every day, in millions of millions of instances; He must continually be the subject of an immense number of real and truly infinitely great crosses and vexations. Which would be to make him infinitely the most miserable of all beings."[1] The statement is, in Edwards' mind, absurd by definition. There is no fact of evil, seen from God's side; for a thing to be morally evil, says Edwards, "either it must be a thing unfit, and unsuitable in its own nature, or it must have a bad tendency; or it must proceed from an evil disposition, and be done for an evil end."[2] None of these things can man attribute to God: it is fit that his Wisdom, rather than chance, should order good and evil.

Edwards in studying the problem of human freedom, based his argument upon the fact of God's foreknowledge, as is to be seen both in Freedom of the Will, and in the Decrees and Election. As we should expect it, this proposition which deals with foreknowledge appears as number one:

> Whether God has decreed all things that ever came to

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[1] Ibid., pp. 163-164. [2] Ibid., p. 164.

> pass or not, all that own the Being of a God, own that he knows all things beforehand. Now, it is self-evident, that if he knows all things beforehand, he either doth approve of them, or he doth not approve of them; that is, he either is willing they should be, or he is not willing they should be. But to will that they should be, is to decree them.[1]

That the problem of evil was a persistent problem can be seen by recording the number of different places it is mentioned in this series; just as in the section we have noticed from Freedom of the Will, so, too, we find different approaches, different solutions. Thus, in number eight, he states:

> God decrees that [men's actions] shall be sinful, for the sake of the good that he causes to arise from the sinfulness thereof; whereas man decrees them for the sake of theevil that is in them.[2]

A slightly different approach, which sees all actions and all events in the perspective of a grand scheme is suggested in number nine:

> His will of decree, is his inclination to a thing, not as to that thing absolutely and simply, but with respect to theuniversality of things, that have been, or shall be.[3]

> Though he hates sin in itself, yet he may will to permit it, for the greatest promotion of holiness in this universality including all things at all time.[4]

Another avenue of thought, thus from the very nature of God himself, is suggested in number ten:

> It is necessary, that God's awful majesty, his authority and dreadful greatness, justice, and holiness, should be manifest. But this could not be, unless sin and punishment had been decreed

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[1] Ibid., p. 513. [2] Ibid., p. 515. [3] Ibid., p. 516.

[4] Ibid.

> so that the shining forth of God's glory would be very imperfect, both because these parts of divine glory would not shine forth as others do, and also the glory of his goodness, love and holiness would be faint without them; nay, they could scarcely shine forth at all.[1]

Not only is it necessary for the fullness of God's being, but because it is necessary for the full stature of man:

> . . . .as it is necessary that there should be evil because of the glory of God could not but be imperfect and incomplete without it, so evil is necessary in order to the highest happiness of the creature, and the completeness of that communication of God, for which he made the world; because the creature's happiness consists in the knowledge of God and the sense of his love. . . .The sense of good is comparatively dull and flat, without the knowledge of evil.[2]

In numbers seventeen and eighteen we find statements to the effect that "Evil is an evil thing, and yet it may be a good thing that evil should be in the world."[3] Number fifty-nine, the last on the list, is a concise statement of his final solution to the problem of evil, which later appeared in the Freedom of the Will.[4] He had arrived at the point where the position in number nine seemed to be true and reasonable; the immediate objection to be raised against it is "God may commit evil, that good may come of it." His answer was that while it is "absolutely evil for any being to commit evil that good may come of it, ...it would be no evil, but good, even in a creature, to will that evil should come to pass, if he had wisdom sufficient to see

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[1] Ibid., p. 516.
[2] Ibid., p. 517.
[3] Ibid., p. 519.
[4] Ibid., pp. 164-165.

certainly that good would come of it, or that more good would come to pass in that way than in any other."[1]

This is, I think, a curious admission on Edwards' part. God does not actually commit the evil act, no more than the sun creates darkness, yet God, unlike the Sun, has some control. The solution, with all its attempt to be fair and honest, does not actually go beyond Calvin's. Calvin, too, had found it necessary to use the sun as an analogy, although his illustration with imagery is quite different from Edwards':

> . . . .whence. . . . . proceeds the fetid smell of a carcass, which has been putrefied and disclosed by by the heat of the sun? It is visible to all that it is excited by the solar rays; yet to person on this account attributes to those rays an offensive smell. So, when the matter of guilt of evil resides in a bad man, why should God be supposed to contract any defilement, if he uses his service according to his own pleasure? Let us dismiss this petulance, therefore, which may rail against the justice of God from a distance, but can never reach that Divine attribute.[2]

Again, Calvin's chapter on "God uses the Agency of the Impious, and Inclines their Minds to execute his Judgments, Yet without the Least Stain of His Perfect Purity"[3] is almost identical with Edwards' labor at this point. The aesthetic element in Edwards' position is new, but the central problem of human freedom and absolute Divine control is not substantially altered at any point.

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[1] Ibid., p. 545.

[2] Institutes, I xvii 5. [3] Ibid., I xviii.

Rufus Suter in his article "The Problem of Evil in Jonathan Edwards" states at the outset that Edwards "endeavoured to reconcile two violently opposed philosophies: calvinism with its insistence on the total depravity of the human race; and Platonism, with its emphasis on the notion that the world is an emanation from a God who contains so much good that He necessarily overflows."[1] In the course of the article he finds five different approaches to the problem of evil, either made directly by Edwards, or inferred from the general position. The first two he gives are (i) "the general fact of evil is inevitable in an actually existing universe"[2] and (ii) "evil, as evil, must exist, if there is to be good."[3] The next three position Suter deduces by inference: (iii) "the circumstances that evil events always lead to good consequences is used as a reason for declaring that the evil events themselves are really not evil"--a solution which, says Suter, is uncalvinistic and"hardly more than implied in Edwards' writings."[4] (iv) This solution"involves a denial of the existence of evil; but it proceeds by denying the existence of the things or events called evil."[5] It is nowhere explicitly stated in Edward's works, but made by inference from the two treatises End in Creation and Nature

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[1]Rufus Suter, "The Problem of Evil in the Philosophy of Jonathan Edwards," Monist, XLIV, 1934, p. 280.

[2]Ibid., p. 282.

[3]Ibid., p. 286.

[4]Ibid., p. 290.

[5]Ibid., p. 292.

of True Virtue. In Suter's eyes, the first of these works takes the position that "all the valuable qualities in souls including their being, are emanations from God" and in the second, God is equated with being-in-general. "The presupposition of these doctrines is that no existent thing or event is, in itself, evil."[1] The fifth solution attempted to give the origin of sin in Adam's perfect heart, and ended in failure to do so--God, who might have prevented sin's occurrence by the operation of his Spirit, did not choose to do so. Adam had been guilty of no previous offence, yet God chose not to prevent the fall.[2] This is certainly no answer to the origin of evil or sin, as Suter well points out; rather it "amounts to an admission of defeat in arriving at a rational solution of the problem."[3] Suter's article, in general, seems to have been more a beginning point for an exposition of his own approach to the problem of evil, than an appreciation of the problem in Edwards' system. Certainly the first two answers were neither original with Edwards, nor do they do justice to his total struggle with the persistence of evil in a world over which God has complete control.

Parkes, utilizing the aesthetic element in Edwards' general approach, suggests that

He found for the mystery of hell a new and strange

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[1]Ibid., p. 292.

[2]Original Sin, Volume II, p. 483.

[3]Suter, op. cit., p. 294.

> solution, growing out of his old conviction of the beauty of the universe. He explained it by the necessity of contrast. Goodness was impossible without wickedness, beauty without ugliness, and happiness without misery: a universe which contained a maximum of goodness must contain also a maximum of evil.[1]

Actually, there seems to be a basis to this conclusion, although upon close consideration, there is hardly evidence to suppose that Edwards himself felt thought it necessary that there should be a "maximum of evil" in the universe. Rather, as he saw it,

> God aims at satisfying justice in the eternal damnation of sinners; which will be satisfied by their damnation, considered no otherwise than with regard to its eternal duration. But yet there never will come that particular moment, when it can be said, that now justice is satisfied.[2]

The two essays which all commentators upon Edwards are agreed as being most "uncalvinistic" and therefore most detrimental to his general theological position, are the essays on the End in Creation and the Nature of True Virtue. Carpenter, going beyond the statments in the first of these essays, states the pantheistic deductions which are implicit in the work:

> If God created the world by an emanation of His own Godhead, and man consists of God's own substance, then the evil in man must correspond to the evil in God. In loving the good in man, God loves his own goodness; in hating the evil in man, God hates his own iniquity.[3]

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[1] Henry Pamford Parkes, Jonathan Edwards, the Fiery Puritan (New York: Minton Balch, 1930), pp. 64-65.

[2] End in Creation, Vol. II, p. 257.

[3] Op. cit., pp. 636-637.

It seems to me that this interpretation of the End in Creation is certainly one which is at best dubious. The deductive method used by Edwards resembles the general Platonistic tradition to this extent--he began with a philosophical idea of God which was accepted in the Western world throughout the history of the Church--

> . . . .it is evident, by by Scripture and reason, that God is infinitely, eternally, unchangeably, and independently glorious and happy.[1]

From this base, and the system of Divine attributes which were generally held by the rationalists of his time[2] he argued from both the "natural" and the "moral" attributes. He mentioned "infinite power, wisdom, righteousness, goodness"[3] in the same sentence, and, beginning with a Being as defined above, possessing the attributes of Power, etc., he deduced that if the attributes themselves were excellent, their use must also be excellent, and without the creation of the world, they never would have been used. Edwards did not explicitly state that God "created the world by an emanation of His own Godhead" nor does it seem to be a justifiable inference to say that he actually meant this. The point of "loving the good in man" is a modern phrase which Edwards did not use, as the analogy of the sun should make clear. In Original Sin Edwards dealt with the problem of native corruption and the argument that this made God the author of human depravity.[4] According

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[1] End in Creation, Vol. II, p. 200.

[2] E. g., Clarke, Op. cit. [3] Volume II, p. 204.

to Edwards, God created man with "two kinds of principles." The "natural" consisted in "mere human nature" whereas the "supernatural" was so ething "above those principles that are essentially implied in, or necessarily resulting from, and inseparably connected with, mere human nature." After Adam's sin, the superior principle was taken away, leaving nothing but the natural principle, much as "light ceases in a room when the candle is withdrawn; and thus man was left in a state of darkness, woful corruption and ruin."[1] This particular distinction he had made clear in Religious Affections in 1746.[2] As Suter observes, Edwards made no attempt to resolve this problem; rather he cloaked it in the term "whatever mystery may be supposed in the affair, yet no Christian will presume to say, it was not in perfect consistence with God's holiness and righteousness."[3] Mere human nature alone was obnoxious to Edwards and to God--it needed redemption, a new principle. That it was positively evil Edwards does not say; that it accounted for the full stature of man he did not contend. Man after Adam's deflection was materially less than man before the Fall. Edwards did not go on to make the pantheistic deduction because it was utterly foreign to his thinking and his piety.

The question arises, Did Edwards make any significant

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[4]Part IV, Chapter II; Volume II, pp. 476 f.

[1]Ibid., p. 477. [2]Volume III, pp. 71-72.

[3]Volume II, p. 483.

contribution in this area? The answer must be, I think, no. He lived in a rationalistic period, and was acquainted with at least two of the leading rationalists of his age, Butler and Clarke. While rejecting deism, and the deistic position to the extent of ignoring it, he preferred to defend what seemed to him to be essential facts of human existence--human depravity and the necessity of the work of the Holy Spirit. He posited two axioms which he never doubted: his belief that the God of his philosophical definition corresponded with the God of the Bible, and his belief that God was in absolute control over the world and ruled through direct intervention in the affairs of men. When he came to the fundamental question as to the origin of sin in Adam, he backed away from it. When he came to the problem of the existence of evil in the world, he contended that evil, per se, was evil, but that it had a place in the total scheme of existence. While he did not repeat Butler's position, he did not disagree with the conclusions to which Butler pointed. His main concern was not to solve the problem but to refute specific objections to the general position which he felt to be correct and necessary in the light of reason, the Bible, and his own experience. The problem created through the charge of pantheism which has been raised again and again against Edwards[1] need not be reviewed here, There is a certain similarity between Edwards' position in relation to the expansive "goodness"

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[1]see, for example, A. C. McGiffert, Protestant Thought Before Kant (New York: Charles Scribner's Son, 1915), pp. 179 f.

which is at the very center of God, and the general philosophical principle of plentitude which has been so common Christian philosophy. But in the End in Creation he does not follow the generally accepted position; rather, through his definitions[1] of God and his a priori deductions, his definition of virtue, and his definition of love (determined by his sense of proportion), he attempts to square his reason with the generally accepted Calvinistic answer that God created the world for His own glory. And Edwards, like all good Calvinists, thought that he had proved his point, through the use of reason. As we have no ed, Edwards did not progress beyond Calvin's own position, nor are we too certain that he attempted to do so. Through the help of what seems to us to be an impossible psychology (especially as it related to Adam) and his "daring theory of identity;"[2] he maintained the doctrine of Original Sin, and created a system which a liberal of a later date called "to the last degree barbaric, mechanical, materialistic, and pessimistic."[3] The most we can do is to leave out the adjectives of Holmes, the suggestive but not too accurate scholarship of Carpenter, and the understandable but overworked enthusiasm of Haroutunian, and try to accept the thought for it was.

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[1]I can hardly agree with Haroutunian when he says that "one searches in vain for a 'definition of God'. He gives us no 'idea of God', no reasonable hypothesis as to why and how he should exist." Op. cit., p. 410.

[2]Faust and Johnson, op. cit., p. lxx.

[3]J. W. Holmes, International Review, 1880, p. 24.

The over-arching scheme of human depravity (the division of "mere nature" and supernatural endowments in the soul), plus the doctrine of Providence, and the idea of the Secret and Revealed Will of God seemed impregnable to Edwards' opponents and to those who followed him in New England. Granted his interpretation of the Bible, in which he found the basis for believing in God's foreknowledge of events, and hence control over future events, he could not avoid a scheme of absolute determinism which was solved only by his "cosmic optimism" in the goodness and the unknown but believed in "Secret Will" of God which would ultimately resolve on the Divine level the problem of evil as seen from the human level. It is at the point of Divine foreknowledge that modern metaphysicians have made a contribution, and have at least reduced the problem to some extent. Hartshorne, for example, suggests that

> There could be a future event to an all-knowing being. When a future event comes to happen, such a mind will know more than it did before, but at both times it will know all that there is, though at the later time there will be a new event to know. No ignorance will be involved, if ignorance is accurately defined, namely, as the failure to know some existent thing as existent, or some possible thing as possible, or some partly determinate, partly indeterminate thing as both determinate and indeterminate to just the extent that it really is so.[1]

Such a solution to the problem would be impossible for Edwards. His first assumption in relation to the world and to the future, was that God had absolute control over both.

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[1] *Man's Vision of God*, p. 104.

The notion that the future was open to God was an impossible concept for Edwards. To compare God's relation to the world as a skillful mariner in governing a ship through turbulent waters, dependent upon the factors of wind and currents and other problems inherent in the situation, was dismissed by Edwards as an impossible comparison, simply because God had complete control in His government of the world, whereas the mariner was limited by the conditions of the situation.[1]

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[1] *Decrees and Election*, # 50, Vol. II, pp. 538-539.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSIONS

Paul Elmer More described his "new found religion" as a culmination of a "longing for some audible voice out of the infinite silence." As a complementary aspect of that longing he reacted against what he called the "demon absolute." His words have the power of personal disgust, of a revulsion against an idea which had, so to speak, withheld from him the warmth of the Gospel. He went so far as to say

> The absolute, the abstract, and the infinite--absolute unity, abstract being, and infinite actuality--are the most impertinent and pernicious words in the vocabulary of philosophy. . . These conceptions are the sterile eggs of reason never fecundated by sense; and the philosopher who broods them may addle them and his own brain, but will hatch nothing. To attach such epithets to a personal deity, as the unwary Christian theologians often did, and do, under the influence of a perverted metaphysic, is to dally with sin against the Holy Ghost; for God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.[1]

This protest has the sound of a truly evangelical pronouncement upon all "gnosis" in theology and in religion. It but echoes the statements of the existential philosophy which came out so sharply in Kierkegaard, and in Ritschl; it is a contemporary American statement of the position made clear

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[1]Paul Elmer More, Pages from an Oxford Diary (Princton: Princeton University Press, 1937) section X.

by Barth and Brunner on the European Continent. It stands, I think, at one pole of the present-day religious consciousness, as a witness to the Biblical revelation. It carries on the tradition which is now currently called "Hebrew-Christian" which demands a certain fundamental assumption about the nature of God and His relation to the world. It differs sharply--one might say, stands over against, that tradition our "Western" world has inherited from Greek philosophy, in which God is conceived of "as a self-sufficient being whose end is to contemplate himself."[1] This second tradition is one which lends itself to metaphysical abstractions; it is still one of the fundamental controlling factors in all the Christian thinking which is concerned with either Aristotelian philosophy, or with a too-close attention to the early Church Fathers, Creeds, and Councils.

This is not to suggest that it is possible for us to think in purely "Hebrew" or "Greek" categories; nor is it to even hint that either of these traditions has existed in a pure form in the history of the Church. But it is to affirm that this distinction is of some aid when we come to attempt to see how Edwards' mind worked over the "idea" of God and the "problem" of God. If Macmurry is correct in his diagnosis of the Greek consciousness as essentially an "contemplative" one,[2]

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[1]John C. Bennett, Christian Realism (New York: Charles Scribners' Sons, 1941), p. 23.

[2]John Macmurray, The Clue to History (New York: Charles Scribners' Sons, 1939), p. 20, passim.

whose fundamental attitude towards reality is one of aesthetic apprehension, and whose religion is best summarized as "myth and drama"[1] then Edwards does not belong solely to the "Greek" tradition.

Unfortunately for us, the collected works of Edwards do not contain his pastoral prayers, and his diary and his early reflections are all in the form of philosophical propositions and statements. In the second chapter of this essay I set forth his religious experiences, and suggested that in those experiences we had a clueto the source of Edwards' apprehension of God as Being, as the object of contemplation and Adoration. Kenneth E. Kirk's book The Vision of God has as its central thesis, that "Christianity had come into the world with a double purpose, to offer men the vision of God, and to call them to the pursuit of that vision."[2] The vision by its very name, suggests the mental attitude which Macmurray has dubbed "contemplative," and it forms the content of the modern Roman Catholic thought as well as Anglican. Baron von Hügel in his essay on "The Idea of God," after spending several pages in a critical review of Pringle-Patterson's book on God, makes this statement:

> If we take so utterly daring a teacher as is St. Catherine of Genoa of man's Pure Love of God as man's perfection, since it alone imitates and reciprocates the Pure Love of God for man, as part

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[1] Ibid., p. 23.

[2] Kenneth E. Kirk, The Vision of God, The Christian Doctrine of the Summum Bonum. (London: Longman, Green, & Co., 1937), p. 1.

> and parcel of God's essential nature, we discover that God is found so lovable and so love-impelling, precisely because He who has no essential need to be loved by finite spirits, still less to attain to self-consciousness by their existence and by His love of them, nevertheless does love them far better than ever they can love themselves, and invites their love of Him because it alone is the adequate means and end of their happiness.[1]

This might have been a statement made by Edwards, except that he could never have consciously taken for his teacher a Roman saint; to contemplate, to "see God"--that was the end of the Edwardean theology, and it was the goal of his personal life. As a matter of fact, there are several parallels between the "Calvinistic" Edwards and the "Catholic" von Hügel, as there is a pervasive sense of kinship in Edwards' thought with "Catholic" thought about God as Being. Von Hügel's central affirmation about God in his short essay on "Suffering and God" is that "God is that Perfect Love, Unmixed Joy, Entire Delectation."[2] For him, as for Edwards, "the thirst of religion is, at bottom, a metaphysical thirst. . . ."[3] He felt, as Edwards did, that "Self-love, Self-Regard, must be estimated an evil, not directly according as it is, or is not, a love of any Being for himself, but according as the self of such a Being deserves, or does not deserve, such love."[4]

Now Von Hügel consciously quotes Plato, Aristotle, Plotinus, and the saints of the Catholic tradition; Edwards

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[1]Baron Friedrich von Hügel. Essays and Addresses on the Philosophy of Religion, Second Series. (London. J. M. Dent & Sons Limited, 1926), p. 153.

[2]Ibid., p. 208. [3]Ibid., p. 207. [4]Ibid., p. 202.

shows direct acquaintance with neither the Greek philosophers nor the "mystical saints" of Christian tradition. Yet there is a certain fundamental parallelism in the entire structure of both men's thought, and especially so on their idea of God and His relationship to men. How shall we account for this affinity?

There are numerous problems which must be considered here, almost simultaneously, if we are to get any kind of a suitable answer to our question. We have as facts before us, the early idealism of Edwards as recorded in his college notebooks, and his "mystical" religious experiences. Woodbridge Riley traces the roots of Edwards metaphysical idealism back to his philosophical immaterialism which in turn rested upon his "quietistic experiences which led him so early to a real belief in theunreality of the external world."[1] Carpenter suggests that "All of Edwards' work was founded on a psychology of mysticism, which was radically different from the theology of Calvinism."[2] However, he inverts the order suggested by Riley, and says that "as a boy [Edwards] was a precocious idealist who made daring hypothesis concerning the nature of knowledge, before undergoing intense mystical experiences and becoming "converted" to a Christianity generally called Calvinism."[3]

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[1]Woodbridge I. Riley "The Real Jonathan Edwards," The Open Court, XXII, (1908), p. 709.

[2]Op. cit., p. 633. [3]Ibid.

F. D. Maurice in a short but penetrating analysis of Edwards' thought suggests that Edwards, as a person of the eighteenth century, adopted the idea that happiness was"our being's end and aim," and with this "Edwards' conception of God fades from that of a supremely righteous into a supremely 'happy Being'. . . .This happy Being is removed from all participation in the miseries of His Creation."[1] This is a criticism of Edwards' position which a good many moderns would agree to, but von Hügel claims that

> the religious sense. . . .must be allowed to press on to, to be moved and fully satisfied only by the Ultimate, the Absolute, This Absolute, however, is not conceived, or indirectly experienced by, such Religion, Plotinus-like, as without interiority--without richness or articulation, as above all Beauty, Truth and Goodness; but as overflowing with a life articulated within Itself--a life which indeed, freely willed Creation, a Creation whose Joy is its Joy, yet which in Itself, apart from such Creation, is full of Joy."[2]

The idea of compassion, for von Hügel, takes the place of "suffering" as it is stated so fully by Paul Elmer More who, as he admits, is at the opposite end of religious thought from von. Hügel. Both Maurice and von Hügel claim that they represent the "religious need" of men--one claims that Righteousness implies a concern which goes beyond "sympathy"; the other is content to say that even the meaning of the Cross is to be interpreted as only the "human" nature of Christ undergoing suffering.

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[1] F. D. Maurice, Systems of Moral and Metaphysical Philosophy. Vol. II, p. 470.

[2] Op. cit., p. 206.

Being and Will -- can these two ways of thinking about God be put together? Haroutunian, who feels that our naturalistic twentieth century is in spirit akin to a Calvinism, says that the "truth" which was implicit in the doctrines of sovereignty, grace, predestination and election, depravity, and regeneration need to be reasserted; as such, the "essence of Calvinism" is revealed when

> men refuse to shut their eyes to the world. . . . recognize their connection with and their dependence upon a world which supports them and often ignores their personal welfare... . .find happiness in self-denial and a love which grows out of wisdom. . . . when their sense of the tragedy of life persists and can be transmuted into victory over the world."[1]

Haroutunian is not concerned about a doctrine of God: he is concerned with "facing life." He is willing, as he claims that Edwards was willing, to remain essentially agnostic at the point of the "doctrine." But our question persists: can we meaningfully think of God as Being, as completely self-sufficient and at the same time think of Him as Righteous Will, purposing aims and goals for Himself and for men? These ideas seem to me to be contradictory; and the suggestion has been offered that Edwards found them to be contradictory, too.

If we could be certain, with von Hügel, that men must think of God as the Absolute, then we should have an answer to the question why Edwards was not content to think of God

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[1]Joseph Haroutunian, Piety Versus Moralism: The Passing of New England Theology. (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1932). p. xxv.

in terms of will alone. But an answer of this kind is as unnecessary as it is unsatisfactory. The thought world of Edwards' time was impregnated with Platonic philosophy; Dr. McGiffert suggests that

> the Greek interpretation of life has passed from mind to mind and from generation to generation like the fiery Greek beacons which carried from mountain top to mountain top the news that Troy had fallen, one enlightened spirit setting another on fire. So Shaftesbury[1] or Cudworth or Hutchenson lit the mind of Edwards.

All the thinking of his age had to come to terms with and to utilize the idea of 'attributes' as significations of God's nature--this gave the philosophical base for "Being." The "mystery" of the Infinite Being was a commonplace way of thinking about God in early New England.

But in Edwards the idea of God as Being was reinforced by his own religious experiences. He noted that they did not exactly correspond to the interpretation of conversion which the Divines had set forth in their books of instruction. The idea of God's Sovereignty over events in history and over the event of nature came to him thru a Bible-centered tradition, a tradition which rooted deep in the Old Testament. God's activity was interpreted in terms of the movement of the revivals across New England and the neighboring states in the New World. An idea of God which would have been an essentially static one was made dynamic by the identification of the God of his philosophy and his experience with the God who caused

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[1] Op. cit., p. 188.

the revivals and the calamities in nature and history.

It is in the combination of the Biblical revelation of an Active Purposing God with the God of the Greek philosophers which is the real clue to the source of the ideas of God which we have, not only in Edwards, but in orthodox Christian theology as a whole. And it is at precisely at this point that our thought-world breaks with the past, in two different but important ways. In the intervening centuries since Edwards lived man has been "discovered." Modern thought has been forced to come to terms with the idea of "Mind" and of "Personality" in order to understand man and in order to get new insights for men's religious consciousness. It is not by accident that two of the most penetrating minds of our time, Dr. Calhoun and Dr. Temple, have chosen to use analogically the idea of Mind (both men basing a good deal of their argument upon the work of A. N. Whitehead) as the best clue to our "understanding" the nature and the activity of God. Liberation from the idea of a static Being to an active personal God has come thru the developments in the biological and psychological sciences.

The second way of breaking with the past has come from within the tradition itself--the Continental Theologians have renounced all attempts to think of God in terms of philosophy, and in this way they have broken with the traditional orthodox treatment of the Bible and of Theology. Brunner, for example, in his little book God and Man makes this his first statement:

> It is perhaps not unfitting to describe the theological movement of the present time as one which is concerned to take the Biblical concept of God seriously, and by so doing to free it and our whole interpretation of life from the stranglehold of Greek philosophy, in which it has been stifled for thousands of years.[1]

Haroutunian suggests that "medieval theology could have been saved only through a metaphorical and poetical translation of its doctrines. The truths contained in it, in so far as they transcended the peculiarities of medieval culture and sank deep into the nature of things, could have been saved through their assumption of an allegorical significance."[2] Actually, one wonders if this could have happened; Edwards who has aptly been described as one whose "curiosity was constantly on tiptoe,"[3] was abreast the best thinking of his time, But withal this, his thought world was essentially a "static" one, in which God moved now here, now there, to fulfil his unknown and incomprehensible ends..Religious truths could not be treated allegorically because they were believed literally; an allegorical treatment is not necessary as long as a literal treatment is possible. But all this is but saying that the rigidities of orthodoxy did have to go, and in so far as Edwards' thought is rigid, it, too, has been ignored.

As we have pointed out, the sovereignty of God, in Edwards' mind, dealt almost solely withe problem of salvation

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[1]Emil Brunner, God and Man; Four Essays on the Nature of Personality . Trans. David Cairns. (London: Student Christian Movement Press, 1936), p. 38.

[2]Piety Versus Moralism, p. xix.

[3]Dr. McGiffert, op. cit., p. 17.

and election; and in so far as "history" was seen as the unfolding of the scheme of redemption, God was Sovereign Lord of History. As Edwards attempted to understand the significance of the events of his time, a good deal of provincialism entered his thought; the idea that the "last days" were about to be inaugurated in his very town, utilizing the efforts of his ministry, tended to give added importance to his work and his labor, and made his defeat all the more bitter. As a religious individual the last years of his life were dominated by this idea, by this hope, which is at the very opposite of the contemplative "mysticism" which we think we find traces of in his early experiences. The various interests and activities of the last years offer us more problems than solutions to old problems. The years in which the essays which seem to lead in the direction of pantheism, were written were also the years in which he was most active as a student in interpreting the "Scriptural prophecies." To say that in these last years "mysticism" was victorious (as Carpenter suggests) seems to me to miss the significance of the late life activity of our author.

To the modern mind it seems that this interpretation of history should have made a conscious problem in Edwards' thought about God and His nature; yet we have seen that through his philosophical idealism he had arrived at a satisfactory way of thinking that although the drama of human existence had to be lived in full reality for men, it had already reached its culmination in the Divine Mind. Granted the presupposition

of foreknowledge, and Edwards' interpretation of the Scriptures, and that all that happened is but the "extent of God's working," it was not impossible for him to hold it all together in a coherent system. It simply remains for us to say that such a system is impossible for us today. The world of human relations is not, we feel, settled; it is open both for men and for God.

Parrington describes Edwards' life as a "spiritual tragedy enacted within the narrow walls of a minister's study. . . .He was called to be a transcendentalist emancipator, but he remained a Calvinist."[1] Although this is an unfair and an uncritical estimate of the man's life, yet it suggests a protest which is valid. Edwards wasted time and ability in defeating arguments rather than in building a "system" of his own--defense of a system rather than working out new solutions seems to be the key to his last efforts. The sovereignty and sufficiency of God were the two central notions about God which run consistently throughout his life; no problem, either theoretical or actual was allowed to change these emphasises which he felt to be essential as well as accurate doctrine.

It remained only for later generations to raise the question whether after all the kind of experience which he had and which he delineated as being "true religion" need be

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[1]Vernon Louis Parrington, Main Currents in American Thought (New York: Harcourt Brace and Company, 1930), Volume I, p. 163.

understood within the framework of orthodox theology. The tendency within Christian circles in the United States in the last three decades has been one which offered just this kind of a solution; it, too, embodied the principle that it was imperative for men to experience God, but it denied that it was necessary to utilize the entire terminology and explanatory system of Calvinism in order to make it valid.

In this essay we began with an attempt to set forth two contradictory statements about God. We said that Edwards conceived of God as Being and as Will, and that these two modes of apprehension lead to ultimately different conceptions of God. Historically and logically this seems to be true. The classical examples of "Hebraic" thinking which conceive of God as purposive Will leads to one kind of religious and ethical action; the "Hellenic" thought which identifies the "Good, true and Beautiful" with the Absolute which is above and beyond all human apprehension and comprehension, leads to a kind of contemplative optimism. These two modes were put together early in the history of the Church; at successive times strong minds rose in the Church, attempting to free the "Biblical" idea of God and salvation from the additions made by Greek philosophy, the strongest statements coming from Luther and more recently, Barth. As long as men hold to the verbal inspiration of the Scriptures, and feel secure in the exercise of their rational faculties in explaining the Scriptures in terms of an orthodox statement of belief, and experience an overwhelming conviction of God in their own lives,

apparent inconsistencies can be explained or explained away. As long as God's Sovereignty remained not only a rational conviction, but at the same time, a "delightful" conviction, Edwards could not experience any profound difficulty in "justifying the ways of God to men." Does this solution, piety, actually answer the problem which we raised? I think that it does. Men's faith in God rests not entirely upon their intellectual affirmation of their "creeds"; the creed at best is but an attempt to make rational a prior experience, a symbol. The piety of a man like Edwards is more than the creeds to which he gave rational assent, as he well understood when he attempted to state the difference between the "natural" man and the Christian Saint. The knowledge of the head, without the experience of the "heart" was insufficient; the knowledge of dogma and of doctrine, of Biblical history and of Church history, when reinforced by a vital religious experience, made for a coherent system which was valid for those who had experienced it. An analytical treatment of Edwards' thought, and this alone, would be insufficient to show how the two ideas of God could be held together with so little apparent conflict.

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